

Living Memory in
Ceremony
and
the bone people

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ABSTRACT/ PREFACE

Focusing on two novels, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Keri Hulme's *the bone people*, this thesis attends to the enduring power of stories, and the influence of personal and cultural memory on the lives of the main characters in both novels. This is a comparative study of the wisdom these two indigenous women writers share with their reading audience. It affirms the necessity of heeding their wisdom.

Chapter One traces the presence of living indigenous memory and belief in the approach to writing taken by Silko and Hulme. It attends to the connections between land, memory and stories by drawing on published and unpublished interviews with both authors, and other Maori and Native American writers.

Chapter Two focuses on *Ceremony* and the influence of personal and mythic memory on the protagonist Tayo. He comes to regard memory and love as constructive forces which balance evil and incoherence. This chapter also traces Tayo's experience of hospitalisation and compares it with Simon's experience in *the bone people*.

Chapter Three crosses the ocean back to New Zealand and *the bone people*. Here, the focus shifts to the three main characters Simon, Joe and Kerewin, and their individual responses to personal and ancestral memory. Like Tayo, each of them comes to see that an open, constructive response to the past builds community in the present, potentially enriching the future.

In *Ceremony* and *the bone people* the reader is invited to reflect on the varied consequences of remembrance. Both novels address the way memory shapes a process of healing. In doing so, they draw the reader into consideration of the interconnections between individual, communal and global healing, a fragile process encouraged by Silko and Hulme in their creative weaving of language and story.

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CHAPTER ONE

'To turn around a terrible silence': Memory and the Power of Storytelling

Keri Hulme lives at Okarito, a settlement that has seen a recent increase in year-round population to about twenty two people.¹ In Okarito, Hulme has found a place that reflects her abiding awareness of the land. She has written about this coast, and two other Southern coasts, Moeraki and Rakiura, in her book *Homeplaces*. This chapter will discuss the connections between land, storytelling and memory in the work and life of Hulme and Leslie Marmon Silko, before moving on to the respective cultural antecedents of such connections.

A homeplace embraces and identifies a community in tribal contexts; it is the foundation for the stories that gather and help define the people. Bonding with the land is not erased through time or colonisation. The connection endures, as Hulme states: "domination by another culture does not mean that erstwhile love/cherishing/treasuring of the place stops.... you remember, according to your ability to remember, how appearances were."² Here

¹ Coates, K. "Bowed, but not Broken" An Interview with Keri Hulme. *The Press*, 8 August 1992. Weekend section, p. 1.

² Hulme, K. "An ancient moko" *New Zealand Listener* (October 16, 1993, p. 49-50.) p. 49.

Hulme makes a crucial statement concerning the interrelationship of memory, land and cultural survival. One's "ability to remember" determines the response to the past and the present. If memory is kept alive it can survive "domination by another culture." The novels *the bone people* and *Ceremony* are paramount examples of the enduring power of memory. Hulme and Silko articulate and remember the sacred past through story. In doing so they bring that remembrance into the present world of their readers, keeping memory alive there.

Hulme demonstrates the link between traditional practice and the contemporary world, when she comments (in the review quoted above) "on the whaktauiki [proverb] which acts as the sub-subtitle: 'Whenua i maharatia, haehae nga takata'. This is translated as 'Land of memories, scarred by people'. One of my elders, after hearing the phrase and translation, spontaneously said, 'Oh no, land *remembered although people scar.*'"³ Her elder affirms the connections between memory and survival. Memory provides a depth of vision in the present. It affirms change and flux as a process of life, and also reminds one of earlier ways of being. Memory of the past may transcend the scars of the present. This is evident in Hulme's statement about her homeplace Moeraki.

Much of *the bone people* was written at Moeraki, another small coastal settlement on the Southeast coast of the South Island. Writing in this place of the land and heart, Hulme clarifies her place in time:

I have, one way or another, always been here all my life. I am not often here in the physical sense of occupying Moeraki-space and Moeraki-time,

³ *ibid*, p. 50.

but I never leave it. It sometimes seems that I am swept by two tides, one the here and now which is the inexorable, bringing me to death, and the other a wave burgeoning forever out of the past, bearing me aloft and away from any future shore.⁴

There is continuity in the land, there is continuity in the blood, there is continuity in stories. For Hulme, memory of the past provides a solidity in the present. This is particularly true of her relationship with her Maoritanga, as we shall see. Stories from the oral tradition have their own life, like blood. They are passed on through the generations, surviving according to the peoples' "ability to remember" and their commitment to the unique life of present and future communities. For Hulme the past can transcend the "inexorable" as long as memory is nourished. That memory begins with the land. Her feelings about Moeraki as a place extend to encompass her feelings about time, culture and identity; her homeplace is that powerful and pervasive.

Hulme's connection with the land is tempered by a respect for its power. This was evident in an interview she did with me:

I can't find — and I love this land as much as I love people — but I cannot find anything sentimental or romantic about it. It can nurture you, if you work at it, but surely it can kill you quite quickly....

I think you ignore the power of the place at your own peril. You can shut yourself away in the city for as long as you like but sooner or later it will get through. What it certainly is not is a comfortable, cherishing sort of place.⁵

The rugged landscape demands attention. Because of that it enters the consciousness of the inhabitants very directly: you must know the land or die. This is especially true of the experience of

⁴ Hulme, K. and Robin Morrison, *Homeplaces: Three Coasts of the South Island of New Zealand*. (Auckland: Hodder & Staughton, 1989), p. 59.

⁵ Keri Hulme spoke to me in the impressive octagonal living/writing/eating/entertaining/library multi-room in her self-built Okarito house. The room defied any singular definition. Unpublished interview with Keri Hulme. © C. Dawson 29 August, 1993.

Working with the large billowing nets used to catch the tiny creatures has given Hulme an appropriate metaphor for the writing process, as she tells Shona Smith: "You can use words that convey a sense by leaving out what you want to say — this [she continues] is Hulme's theory of words as a net."⁸ As I shall explore in the third chapter, it is precisely what Hulme does *not* reveal that draws us more deeply into the net of words, until we are caught and dropped into a river of story, the current of the character's memory. Each character breaks from their present to set out alone, hoping to weave a shared future out of their own gaps and visions.

Hulme displays an understanding of the connections between land, story, memory and cultural survival. As a writer she partakes in acts of continuance. This responsibility is acknowledged by Silko.

Leslie Marmon Silko's homeplace Laguna has likewise bound her in a web of stories. Laguna Pueblo was established in 1700, and is part of the Western Keres group of pueblo in New Mexico, about halfway between Albuquerque and Zuñi. The Keres language spoken there is linguistically related to Uto-Aztecan.⁹ It is a place of canyons and vast mesas, where rainfall is low and the sound of the ocean can only be imagined in the vast stillness of that place.

Silko expresses her profound relationship with her homeplace in one of her earliest biographical notes: "I grew up at Laguna Pueblo. I am of mixed breed ancestry, but what I know is Laguna. This place I am from is everything I am as a writer and human being."¹⁰

⁸ Smith, S. "Constructing the author: an interview with Keri Hulme" *Untold* magazine No. 4, (Christchurch: Untold Books, Spring 1985. pp. 26-34) p. 28.

⁹ Tyler, H. A. *Pueblo Gods and Myths*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 316p.) p. 291.

¹⁰ Silko, L. M. "Notes by the Contributors" in Rosen, K (ed.) *The Man To Send Rainclouds*. (New York: The Viking Press, 1974. 178p.) p. 176.

Like Hulme, Silko never forgets where she is from. Her memory is cultivated and treasured through stories. Thought and belonging as creative acts of healing are discussed by Silko in a letter to James Wright. In this she makes clear the longing she felt whilst away from her homeland. The resulting "re-making" is a testament to her links with that land:

When I was writing *Ceremony* I was so terribly devastated by being away from the Laguna country that the writing was my way of re-making that place, the Laguna country, for myself. In sand paintings the little geometric forms are said to designate mountains, planets, rainbows — in one sand painting or another all things in Creation are traced out in sand. What I learned for myself was that words can function like sand....the idea or memory or feeling — whatever you want to call it — is more powerful and important than any damage or destruction humans may commit.¹¹

Land is represented in Navajo sand paintings, which in Laguna are filled inwards from the margins. The picture is gradually completed, but some idea of its scope is necessary. Silko sees a parallel between this ancient means of affirming links with land and memory, and the practise of storytelling: "memory... is more powerful and important than any damage or destruction humans may commit." Here she concurs with Hulme ("you remember... how things were") in connecting memory and place. Silko's comment affirms her creation of *Ceremony* as a profound expression of remembrance; in the novel she "re-makes" the land and its stories for herself, and her readers. It becomes artificial to compartmentalise influences upon Silko and Hulme: land, culture and story interact all the time.

Just as the land links produce stories and associations over generations, memory encourages continuance. This is evident in the Laguna response to death. Death is not an ending; memory ensures

¹¹ Silko, L. M. and James Wright *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace*. Letters edited by Anne Wright. (Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 1986. 108p.) p. 27-8.

the continuance of ancestral presence:

At Laguna, when someone dies, you don't "get over it" by forgetting; you get over it by *remembering*, and by remembering you are aware that no person is ever truly lost or gone once they have been in our lives and loved us, as we have loved them.¹²

The links between memory, tribe and story are clear in Silko's statement. Through sharing your life and stories with others you nourish their memories, and memories can survive in the harshest of surroundings. So many of the elderly characters in *the bone people* and *Ceremony* have become strong and loved through sharing and nurturing stories and memories. By recalling the stories and person, those who grieve have another correct example of how their people live together, and the distinguishing qualities of their particular community. They can carry on defining their own reality.

The Maori Understanding of Language and Tradition

Language is a primary means of transmitting principles and protocol for harmonious living. It is therefore inseparable from the development and execution of the values of Maoritanga. It is the most appropriate method for embodying tradition and memory so self-definition may continue.

In Maori oral tradition language has tremendous, sacred power. It is language that brings forth the soul of the person. In the following quotation, Father Henare Tate explains how mana - "a force that

¹² Silko, *Delicacy*, p. 29.

brings about change; an ability to act in ways that move people....comes from a lifetime of experiencing and addressing the unseen world of tapu." This extract is relevant as it reveals how the expression of language informs and expresses all levels of Maori life.

Tapu means far more to the Maori than just prohibitions ('Don't touch this', 'Don't go there'). Tapu is the spiritual essence of all things. It arises from the mauri, the life principle of all creation, and constantly points us back to the source: Io, or God....

There are three ways of addressing tapu: through tika (justice), pono (integrity, or faithfulness to tika) and aroha (love). By continually striving to act with tika, pono and aroha in day-to-day life, tapu flourishes and mana radiates outwards like the ripples of a stone dropped into a pond....

Nowhere has the erosion of tapu been more devastating than in the loss of the Maori language. Language is tapu because it expresses the very soul of a person. Without te reo, tapu is stifled....

If tapu is the water source, and mana the gushing of the well, then te reo is the bore which allows mana its expression.¹³

Reflecting on the innate capacity for language to express a person, Tate surveys the damage that occurs when expression and self-identification cease. Cleve Barlow has described mana as meaning, in one sense, "the enduring, indestructible power of the gods. It is the sacred fire that is without beginning and without end."¹⁴ If mana grows through the constant application of tika, pono and aroha, then failing to nurture these principles because of personal error, or wider institutionalised oppression, has disastrous consequences. It is the

¹³ Tate, H. "The Unseen World" *New Zealand Geographic*, No. 5 (January-March 1990), pp. 88, 90. Note too the recent decision from the Privy Council regarding the TVNZ assurance (in the State Enterprises Statement of Corporate Intent) to "reflect and develop...Maori language and Maori culture, by producing and broadcasting programmes about New Zealand or New Zealand interests and operate in a manner which actively reflects the cultural ... diversity of our society." Such a statement creates a "'legitimate expectation' that the Crown would act in accordance with the assurance, and if, for no satisfactory reason, the Crown should fail to comply with it, the failure could give rise to a successful challenge on an application for judicial review." *Judgment of the Lords of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council*, Delivered the 13th December, 1993, pp17-18. Given TVNZ's consistently slothful interpretation of the verb "active" in the area of Maori broadcasting, challenges may well be forthcoming.

¹⁴ Barlow, C. *Tikanga Whakaaro: Key Concepts in Maori Culture*. (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1987 p.) p. 61.

recovery from the consequence of neglect that constitute the journeys of the main characters in *Ceremony* and *the bone people*.

For Maori, full spiritual and personal development depends on the survival of *te reo*. Maori language, identity and politics bind together in maintaining and protecting self-determination, through nourishing memory. Colonisation has "silenced" the language of the *tangata whenua*, the people of the land. As Tate goes on to explain, this lack of attention has left Pakeha (Caucasian New Zealanders) rootless in this land, because the process of colonisation did not respect the *tapu* principles of justice, integrity and love. Tate suggests where an answer lies: "in the *tapu* of the treaty. Address the *tapu* that has been violated, and *mana* will be set free to be the mantle under which all may become *tangata whenua* [people of the land]."¹⁵ The *mana* of the Treaty has retreated underground in despair, just as the spirit of the land lies dormant in *the bone people*, awaiting regeneration through love and correct behaviour, *tika* behaviour.

Speaking with me, Hulme reiterated the links between the spiritual and political worlds: "Personally I think the two things go together. I don't know whether you'd call one the shadow and the other the light."¹⁶ Hulme regards the health of one as reflective of the other; there is no division.

Informing their response to the land, and the stories that emerge from it, Hulme's and Silko's mixed-blood ancestry has a powerful effect on the content and intention of their work. Hulme is of Maori (Kati Mamoe, Kai Tahu; hapu (sub-tribe) Ngaterangiamoa and

¹⁵ Tate, 91. Tate's article is a humbling evocation of the interconnectedness of all aspects of the Maori world, and the respect and reflection such a view encourages. There is a clear awareness of the consequences of one's behaviour, which affects the community in their movement towards continuance.

¹⁶ Hulme to Dawson, interview.

Ngaiteruahikihiki), Orkney Scots and Lancashire English ancestry. All these roots influence her work, providing her with a unique fusion of style and language, as she explains in her interview with Elizabeth Alley:

I can't section me up, but I think of myself as Maori rather than Pakeha and where this may seem ridiculous to go through the whakapapa, the family tree and says, oh, but you're only one eighth Maori, how can you feel like that? Well, that's the strong and the vivid and the embracing, the good side of things. That's where I draw my strength from, and that's where I learnt about words first and that's the side I learnt to tell stories from. But it's more than that. I am sure of myself from my Maori background.

This comment provides a useful transition point from a discussion of Hulme's view of language as something that is also vivid, strong and embracing, to the way culture affects her identity. Her Maori roots are deep, they are her *turangawaewae*, her place where she stands, solid in belonging. Hulme says she knows "where my *turangawaewae* is, as far as words are concerned, as far of the craft of storytelling is concerned, and certainly that's where I feel most at home."¹⁷ The depth of her memory provides security.

In an interview published to coincide with the launch of her first book of poetry *The Silences Between*, she explained the essential things she had taken from the oral tradition of Maori literature into her work:

Everything which I think belongs to my *taha Maori*: from the exciting nature of words themselves, the power inherent in words themselves, to things as basic as the kinds of images or the way things are alluded to when speaking - whether it is formal oratory or speaking at family hui or reading or listening to waiata. What have I taken? The heart, the bones, the brains, the spirit, everything I can lay my hands on, eh.¹⁸

With this comment, we can begin to see the rich sources Hulme

¹⁷ Alley, E. and M. Williams (ed.) *In the Same Room: Conversations with New Zealand Writers*. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1992. 322p.) p. 143.

¹⁸ Long, Don "A Conversation with Keri Hulme" *Tu Tangata* no. 7, p. 5, August 1982. The hui, or gathering, is a prime site for the delivery of waiata - songs which instruct, inform and uplift, as well as fulfilling many communal roles.

draws on in her writing, sources that continue to sustain her ten years later. Time will not make it any more likely to "section" herself. "I find what is loosely called Maori spirituality very congenial — a kind of instinctive response to the environment.... I think that Maori spirituality, the way we perceive the world, has been under threat for so long."¹⁹ The inextricable links between personal, communal, cultural and spiritual becoming are clear here. The traditional memory is kept strong in this work. Though not always in Maori, the wairua, or spirit that Maori culture appreciates and conveys informs and shapes the writing. Hulme has been wide-ranging in sharing her Maoritanga in non-fiction contexts.²⁰ "Your Maoriness, like everything else, is intimately part of you and it will normally show through your writing as well."²¹

Hulme's comments about her mixed background express a delight in the shared heritage she can draw upon, as well as an acute awareness of the impact of colonisation. She describes her Maori side as "a nice touchstone." Things are more effective when Maori define their own reality, on the marae.²²

¹⁹ Hall, Sandi with K. Hulme, "Conversation at Okarito" *Broadsheet*, no. 121, pp. 16-21, 1984. p.16.

²⁰ These include the paper "Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand" in *Only Connect: Literary Perspectives East and West* (ed. Amirthanayagam and Harrex, Adelaide and Honolulu: CRNLE & East-West Center, 1981); a chapter about her roots in Moeraki and Okarito in *Te Whenua, te Iwi* (ed. Jock Phillips, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987); "Myth, Omen, Ghost and Dream" in *Te Ao Marama Volume 2 He Whakaatanga O Te Ao* (ed. W. Ihimaera; Auckland: Reed, 1993. pp. 24-30.) This latter piece has a strong focus on the Maori beliefs regarding ghosts and the supernatural and the links and silences between them, all of which Hulme acknowledges.

²¹ Long, p. 5.

²² The vital role defining one's own reality plays in Maori self- and cultural-determination was explained by Moana Jackson in a seminar given in the Education Department, Canterbury University, August 1992.

Weaving Reality: Story, Memory and Homeplace

When people define their own reality through stories they take responsibility for their cultural memory, identity and destiny. In New Zealand it has too often been the Pakeha decision-makers who have decided what is best for Maori, rather than taking up the role as listener. As Peter Beatson states, even "when a synthesis is felt to be acceptable to one particular culture, its success can only be partial since it remains threatened by and a threat to other modalities of resolution."²³

Witi Ihimaera writer, and editor of the most comprehensive anthologies of contemporary Maori writing, re-vision the dominant paradigm from within the context of indigenous literature, thereby avoiding the numbing effect of domination:

From our perspective, Maori literature is the centre — for if you are Maori and looking out, you do so from your own centre. This is the subversive viewpoint we have taken. We wish to look at things our way, from the inside out, not the outside in.

The centre for all minority cultures must be where language, customs, laws and traditions continue to make a construct which establishes that 'this is what makes us who we are'.²⁴

Ihimaera's request is grounded in the centre of Maori literature, and is a counter to the white tendency to define, to attempt to classify, and then to file away.

Indigenous writers, as hosts to dominant European visitors, can

²³ Beatson, P. *The Healing Tongue: Themes in Contemporary Maori Literature*. Studies in New Zealand Art and Society 1 (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1989. 75 p.) p. 2.

²⁴ Ihimaera, (ed.) *Te Puawaitanga o te Korero*, p. 15. Regarding this process of creating one's reality, Ihimaera believes it is Maori who should edit anthologies of Maori literature: "We can do it ourselves, and we can do it better." (*Mana News Hour*, 7 February 1994.)

share their reality with those who seek to define it, and in that sharing can contribute to a Western response of respect, not reduction. Hulme is clear on 'degrees' of racial identity:

If you are a descendant of Maori, you are Maori if you so live and claim that ancestry and that way of life. I mean you can be 99 percent Maori and be a Pakeha, aside from the fact that your ancestry is there and obviously will get you in the end.²⁵

Ancestry has become an animate and captivating force. The way Hulme describes its determining power is echoed in her description of the landscape: "sooner or later it will get through." Like stories, land and ancestry have their own continuance. In Maori language they are intimately bound: *whenua* can refer to land, and also to the placenta; when a child is born the afterbirth, source of sustenance in the womb, is buried in the land that will continue to sustain the child. Memory braids them together in the imagination. Many Navajo parents bury the placenta of their children under their home doorstep; in the future the children are linked to that homeplace, and return there spiritually. The re-finding and re-membling continues down the bloodline and through the land as people tell their stories of origin.

By presenting us with the opportunity to listen and enter possible alternatives through the power of stories, Hulme manifests her faith in words and imagination. She believes language and stories can enhance our understanding of the different ways of seeing and interpreting the world, and multiple ways of perceiving and responding.

An ancient Maori whakatauki (saying) respects the power and influence of different ways of seeing:

To te kanohi, tona kite
To te hinengaro, tona kite
To te wairua, tona kite.

²⁵ Alley and Williams, *In the Same Room*, p. 152.

The eye, the mind, the soul --
each has its own perspective.²⁶

This proverb exemplifies the respect given to different ways of apprehending and understanding the world in traditional and contemporary Maori thought. Likewise, Hulme wants to attract the reader on different levels, leading us into a story until we are part of it in many ways. Different senses and impressions blend in her writing, evoking different ways of perceiving diverse realities.

For Hulme ancestry is an influence that is latent *in* the blood, and will come forward to assert its presence "in the end." Her belief is borne out in the changes mixed-descent characters undergo. In Silko's work, too, characters of mixed descent are often powerful. Kerewin Holmes and Joe Gillayley in *the bone people* and Tayo in *Ceremony* are proof of the binding influence of ancestry. Negotiation between cultures and periods of time is ongoing. In these novels, characters see cultural truth emerge in the stories they live, stories that continue.

Memory gives weight to the present. It offers the literature the wisdom of preceding stories. It also reveals pain and injustice. Keri Hulme talks of a "kind of ancestors' memory, or a collective unconscious, whatever you like to call it, but you can tap on it, you can draw in it and it is both good, and a responsibility."²⁷ Those whose ancestors endure the agony of dispossession find guidance and truth in the twinned realities of their histories, and their pain. As Witi Ihimaera explains, this truth is ever-present:

For us, the past is not something that is behind us. The past is before us, a long unbroken line of ancestors, to whom we are accountable.
This remains our implicit contract. As it says in the Bible, 'Faith is the

²⁶ "The Living Past" *New Zealand Geographic*, No. 5. p. 75, January 1990.

²⁷ Alley, E. and M. Williams (ed.) *In the Same Room*. p. 145.

substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Who then, will join us in the struggle for a literature in both our languages?²⁸

The past steers and maintains the kaupapa, the policies or rules of operation which are, by application, grounded in the past. Hulme affirms this to Alley: "the past is always before you and it's always part of you. You are familiar of this concept of an uneasy backing into the future as it were? The past is what is alive in the present and in front of you?"²⁹ Honestly facing the past promotes and maintains maturity.

Hulme believes Maori and Pakeha have become more honest with each other, but the time has come to build on and extend that honesty, and its consequences. She continues:

...there are a lot of horrible things about the relationship between Maori and Pakeha and I think the chance is now a viable one because of that honesty. In fact *now* is our chance. If we fluff it up I don't like to think what the future will be. We can do all the right things, we can, for instance, within New Zealand, reconcile the cultures and provide for something new and wondrous to grow in the form of Aotearoa. We can impress and enthuse other places in the world to take responsibility for their pollution and general greed. But it only needs the earth to shrug hard and we can forget it all too.³⁰

Now is the time for constructive dialogue, one that Silko and Hulme contribute to because they share a viewpoint that allows any reader to appreciate diversity. The bridge between cultures is one that has, in the late twentieth century, become a fluid and shifting intersection of influence and media, an influence which Ihimaera asserts erode for good the concept of Maori as on the margin of events:

²⁸ Ihimaera, W. with H. Willaims, I. Ramsden, D. Long, (ed.) *Te Ao Marama* 1, *Te Whakahuatanga O Te Ao: Reflections of Reality* (Auckland: Reed, 1992, 355p.) p.18; echoing Alley and Williams, p. 221.

²⁹ Alley and Williams, *In The Same Room* p. 144. The concept is examined by Kenneth Lincoln who writes about Cree storyteller Jacob Nibènegenesábe ("Slowstream") "who always invoked his audience to 'listen' (*Nutoka moo*), then began formulaically, 'I go backward, look forward (*Usá puyew usu wapiw*), "'as the porcupine does.'" Lincoln, K. *Native American Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. 313p.) p. 127.

³⁰ Alley and Williams, p. 155.

"Sixty percent of us are under the age of 25 and our lives are affected by international politics, economics and cultural trends as is the rest of the world's population. Some *margin*, ne?"³¹ In the flux and contact of the present we are constantly shaped through contact which can determine whether our response is one of active openness and change, or a shifting and insecure attempt to evade who we are and where we come from, to defer accountability rather than sit and *listen* to the stories, the realities. In responding to Silko and Hulme, white readers have a singular opportunity to reassess their values and cultural histories. Such change is the basis for a healthy flourishing in the future.

Home: Silko's mixedblood identity

I
the song
I walk here

Modoc chant³²

Leslie Marmon Silko comes out of an ancient Laguna Pueblo tradition of oral storytelling and healing. Silko's mixedblood origins lead to an awareness of the borderland between cultures. For Silko this space is a site of possibility and responsibility. Like Hulme, she sees the role of mixed-blood as one who acts as an intermediary and ensures the continuation of a vision.

³¹ Ihimaera, (ed.) *Te Puawaitanga o te Korero*, p. 16.

³² Lincoln, *Renaissance*, quotes T. W. Sanders and W. W. Peek *Literature of the American Indian* (Beverly Hills: Glencoe, 1976) p. 47

Silko has Laguna Pueblo, Mexican and white ancestry, and was raised in the tradition of Laguna storytelling and community. For Silko writing has focused in the gap or "borderland" between cultures.³³ "I was born in the in-between. I understand why the old folks cry, and don't understand why they have to keep burying. You know, I'm in a strange place."³⁴ This place is a borderland between cultures, a shifting gap in the terrain of self-identity. Silko sees what elders are losing, and also understands the motivation that drives youth to acts of destructiveness.

Recovering from the desire to destroy or be destroyed is a strong focus in *Ceremony*. For Silko love and memory are the subversive yet transformative forces that turn her protagonist Tayo's "in-betweenness" into a source of insight. Kenneth Lincoln and Edith Swan call Tayo "Silko's double" and "Silko's alter-ego" respectively — both author and character learn the in-sight necessary to survive in two worlds.³⁵ This involves seeing clearly into one's own motives and past, as well as determining the worth of traditional values for the future. Memory enables tradition to live on; it binds and moves through lifetimes. Silko looks inwards to her own memory and imagination, the future before her.³⁶

Having to negotiate cultures has given Silko a clear

³³ Anzaldua, Gloria *Borderlands: the new mestiza = La frontera* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987. 203 p.) Irihapeti Ramsden, "Borders and Frontiers" in *Te Ao Marama 2: He Whakaatanga O Te Ao* ed. W. Ihimaera. (Auckland: Reed, 1993. 359 p.) pp 344-51.

³⁴ Coltelli, L. *Winged Words. American Indian Writers Speak*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 211 p.) p. 149.

³⁵ Lincoln, *Renaissance*, p. 238. Edith Swan "Laguna Symbolic Geography and Silko's *Ceremony*" *American Indian Quarterly*, (vol. 12, 1988, pp. 222-44) p. 222.

³⁶ Gonzalez, Ray "The Past Is Right Here & Now: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko" *The Bloomsbury Review* (April/May, 1992. pp. 5, 10)

understanding of, and love for, her place in her community:

I suppose at the core of my writing is the attempt to identify what it is to be a half-breed or mixed blooded person; what it is to grow up neither white nor fully traditional Indian. It is for this reason that I hesitate to say that I am representative of Indian poets or Indian people, or even Laguna people. I am only one human being, one Laguna woman.³⁷

Just as Hulme is "interested in the people who don't fit in...the fringe dwellers,"³⁸ as the mainstream society would define them, Silko demonstrates this interest and concern in *Ceremony's* section on Gallup's homeless population. Something of her precise and inclusive vision is shared in the following interview with Laura Coltelli. These remarks serve to identify the kind of influences and intentions that guide and shape Silko in her own unique writing, influences that provide a strong grounding from which to respond to events:

...as a writer and a person, I like to think of myself in a more old-fashioned sense, the way the old folks felt, which was first of all you're a human being; secondly you originate from somewhere, and from a family, and a culture. But first of all, human beings. And in order to realize the wonder and power we share, we must understand how different we are too, how different things are. I'm really intrigued with finding out similarities in conditions, and yet divergences in responses, of human beings. I'm really interested in that. Without forgetting that first of all, before we can ever appreciate what's the same, we have to really love and respect and be able to internalize freedom of expression.³⁹

Silko's inclusive vision is borne out of the knowledge that transitions between cultures are not easy. This position of boundary

³⁷ Silko, L. M. Biographical Note in *The Next World: Poems by Third World Americans*, ed Joseph Bruchac (New York: The Crossing Press, 1978), p. 173. Wendy Rose affirms this warning about generalisation: "there is no genre of "Indian literature" because we *are* all different. There is only literature that is written by people who are Indian and who, therefore, infuse their work with their own lives the same way that you do." W. Rose, "American Indian Poets—and Publishing" in a Special Issue of *Book Forum*, "American Indians Today: Their Thought, Their Literature, Their Art," (ed. Elaine Jahner, 4: 3, 1981. p. 402), quoted in Lincoln, p. 183-4.

³⁸ Kedgley, *Our Own Country*, p. 106.

³⁹ Coltelli, *Winged Words*, p. 153.

crossing finds its realisation in her protagonist-hero Tayo. Like him, Silko has found a security in herself and her background without misrepresenting either.

The Power of Storytelling

The woven endeavour of memory and creation has vital importance in maintaining survival, explains Oklahoma poet Joy Harjo: "Writing helped me give voice to turn around a terrible silence that was killing me. And on a larger level, if we, as Indian people, Indian women, keep silent, then we will disappear, at least in this level of reality."⁴⁰ Memory keeps these women strong in this present reality; it also ensures other ways and worlds of being are remembered, honoured and thus continue. Every word written, and seen, or spoken and heard ensures the story will never end. This is a belief that motivates, and is demonstrated in, Silko's writing.

Reading *Ceremony*, we make a transition into the place of Laguna stories. This means we enter their world, their land, language and belief system. It is a slipping into beauty, a relenting to story that can place us on new trails, because as readers we have the intimate and grave privilege to see the memory of characters, of a people, unfold into becoming as we read. And as the beauty of Silko's story touches us it can, if we are willing, extend our own memory and appreciation of the stories of this earth. In appreciating the stories we

⁴⁰ Coltelli, L. *Winged Words*. p. 58. It is increasingly apparent that survival on a global scale depends upon this braided form of healing and honest attention, as Silko so ably demonstrates in *Ceremony*.

come to respect the people and the land that have created it. In *Ceremony*, the distance between ancient stories and Tayo's experience is very slight. Each Laguna tale informs, represents and deepens the transitions Tayo encourages.

Part of the evocative and representational power of Laguna stories is apparent in the spaces Silko creates within and between the traditional origin tales, and her more contemporary narrative of Tayo's homecoming. The siting of the individual within a larger context of memory and story is a key focus in Silko's work, which the following chapter will attend to. Memory and community become a cherished source for the storyteller, who reveres the interconnectedness of all things by honouring — and sometimes augmenting — the ancient stories. Together these stories link with other stories of her past to sustain the stories (and thus the memories) that are still flourishing. The traditional basis for this view will now be discussed.

Kenneth Lincoln states this link between history, language, and continuing identity: "In the common magic of memory, a generative and regenerative power infuses words. [Remembered] words are the twists in the lifeline to the past, carried forwards humanly."⁴¹ His description is accurate: memory is a "common magic" accessible to everyone. Silko draws on a lifetime of story experience as listener and teller, shaped by Laguna tradition.

The moment of transmission from storyteller to audience is charged with power and precision. This is the moment Silko most prizes as a storyteller, even if her writing is a solitary process: "I really think that to me the real, the ultimate moment, is when you have a

⁴¹ Lincoln, p. 136.

couple of storytellers and a really engaged respectful audience."⁴²

As several Native American writers and critics note, storytelling in Native American traditions is not a static product, but rather an ongoing process, sustained by virtue of audience participation in the story's evolution. When this participatory role is present, as it is in the communal telling of traditional stories, the sense of evolution is embodied in the storyteller, who adapts each telling according to audience need, seasonal shift, and spiritual concerns. Lincoln suggests the complex understanding of language held by Indian cultures:

Words are believed to carry the power to make things happen, ritualized in song, sacred story, and prayer. This natural force is at once common as daily speech and people's names. The empowering primacy of language weds people with their native environment: and experience or object or person exists interpenetrant with all other creation, inseparable from its name. And names allow people to see themselves and the things around them, as words image the spirits in the world.⁴³

Words are therefore redolent with interconnections with other words, and with the world as seen, envisioned and imagined in creative thought. Language is a key to maintaining personal and communal harmony with all of creation. This in turn affects the way each story is told, adjusted as it is for each circumstance, each story describing its own origins. "Oral tribal poetry remains for the most part organic, for tribal poets see themselves as essentially keepers of the sacred word bundle....The people are born into and die out of a language that gives them being."⁴⁴

Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday affirms the literal power of language, a literalness the storyteller tries to create: "It is in the nature

⁴² Coltelli, *Winged Words*, p. 146.

⁴³ Lincoln, p. 43.

⁴⁴ Lincoln, p. 43.

of the oral tradition that language is understood to be a vital and powerful thing in itself, creative in the deepest sense."⁴⁵ Tribal traditions have completely different foundations from western ones.

Paula Gunn Allen notes that looking at one culture using the tools of another is, to say the least, "problematic" as well as reductive.⁴⁶ There are few ways of evoking the multi-dimensional qualities of tribal experience in print. Kenneth Lincoln pinpoints the clear difference in oral and literacy based cultures by drawing on an Utkyihkhalingmiut Eskimo tribal response to literacy by a man named Ikinilik, a response which re-turns the tables onto a white reader. This elder's insight goes to the heart of the reader's desire for resolution and closure in the form of a neatly wrapped-up ending: "'From what you say, it would seem that folk in that far country of yours eat talk marks just as we eat caribou meat.'" As Lincoln asserts "Ikinilik's remark points to the split between language as product and language as process."⁴⁷ Whereas the reader desires completion, an easily assimilated and satisfying ending, a pleasing product — and usually gets it — the listener who participates in oral storytelling is part of an *ongoing* process. Allen clarifies this difficulty in entering process which is partially founded in language:

In English, one can divide the universe into two part: the natural and the supernatural. Humanity has no real part in either, being neither animal nor spirit—that is, the supernatural is discussed as though it were apart from people, and the natural as though people were apart from it. This necessarily forces English-speaking people into a position of alienation from the world they live in. Such isolation is entirely foreign to American Indian

⁴⁵ Momaday, N. Scott, "A Note on Contemporary Native American Poetry" in Niatum, D. *Carriers of the Dream Wheel*, (New York: Harper & Row, 300p.)p.xx.

⁴⁶ Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 244.

⁴⁷ Lincoln, p. 25, cites Knud Rasmussen, *Across Arctic America: Narrative of the Fifth Thule Expedition* (London and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), p. 195.

thought. At base, every story, every song, every ceremony tells the Indian that each creature is part of a living whole and that all parts of that whole are related to one another by virtue of their participation in the whole of being.⁴⁸

As a form of representation language will reflect the speaker's capacity to experience and articulate process. Something is hard to experience fully if one's language, through its own limitations, denies that reality.

The split between understanding language as process or as product is also entered directly when attempting to address and honour oral tradition through the medium of the printed word. As Momaday has pointed out above, oral storytelling is a continuing process of "creative" becoming. The fixed static form of the printed page has a far more selective impact; the writer has fewer senses to appeal to. If words are thought of as products their impact is limited, because they have already been defined and restrained. Louis Owens also makes this point; it is one that has vital implications for self-determination: "With written literacy, language becomes descriptive/historic and begins to lose its unique power as creator of reality."⁴⁹ Static on the page, words lose the regenerative qualities of oral re-telling to audience and writer. Once the type is set, re-vision becomes a privileged and uncommon procedure, accessible to only a few. When language is a process it embraces everyone. When it is more open, more people can, as Hulme suggests, "become a part" of the story they help to shape.⁵⁰ Hulme and Silko both bring an

⁴⁸ Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 60.

⁴⁹ Owens, L. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. 290p.) p. 9.

⁵⁰ Hulme to Dawson, interview. See Chapter Three for discussion of Hulme's ideas of reading and participation.

openness to the printed page which is borne out of their respect for the invigorating process of oral transmission: they include each reader in a participatory process that honours the memory of audience and storyteller.

Representational power in oral culture is fused with the experience of that power: story and song *are* process and lived experience. In Native American tradition therefore, language is *presentative* — it brings spirit forth into being.

Ngahua Te Awekotuku writes about a similar sacred power in the arts and treasures of Maoritanga:

Taha wairua, the way of the spirit in matters Maori, permeates our world so profoundly that to isolate and analyse it is almost like threatening the very fabric itself. Spirituality and artmaking have formed an integral part of the Maori world view from ancient times until the present day.... All prized Maori artefacts acquire power from those many people who have looked after and enjoyed them.⁵¹

The power that Te Awekotuku discusses is similar to the spiritual power Allen describes. It extends through spoken and musical art forms onwards sourced in, and nourishing ancient lore. In Maoritanga the products of the ancestors are living process, because of their sacred mana. Te Awekotuku continues:

The relationship that Maori enjoy and cultivate with taonga tuku iho [treasures of the ancestors] is of major importance. A carved house truly does embody a revered ancestor; a great canoe actually personifies a concept, a vision, that motivates the people.⁵²

If the language base is limited it can be highly instructive for the alienated speaker, when a person familiar with the spiritual centre of experience enters that dissociated tongue and re-invests the language with a uniquely *connected* perspective. Silko and Hulme restore the

⁵¹ Te Awekotuku, N., "Art and the Spirit" in *New Zealand Geographic*, No. 5. p. 93. (Auckland, 1990.)

⁵² Te Awekotuku, pp. 96, 97.

memory and the presence of spirit in the stories they craft, reminding whites of how much we need to remember, before it is too late.

However, Silko and Hulme avoid alienating readers by rejecting them. Instead, they skilfully weave webs of story to encourage attentive participation from the reader, and therefore maximum power from the story. The aftermath of plundering, and the more constructive responses of reverence and remembrance, are salutary reminders to white readers of *the bone people* and *Ceremony*. Responsibility is encouraged through appropriate conduct that respects change and remembrance.

With their work Silko and Hulme participate in the stories that have crossed generations and continents; their responsibility defines their lives and extends far beyond them, into a community of those who listen faithfully. These authors hold an awareness of the enduring matrix of land and memory. When writing is seen as a form of contribution to future generations, it can move out of the limited context of product and enters the *process* of ancestral continuity.

The reader sees many binaries grouped and meshed in *the bone people* and *Ceremony* as the authors work to bring their words alive. Silko sees Tayo as a bridge between the destructive product of nuclear energy and the ancient process of memory, story and spirit; the only force capable of countering the flow of production is awareness and love. In his muteness, Hulme's character Simon mediates between product and process; the notepad messages we (and other characters) receive are a diluted product of his psychic awareness of, and immersion in, a continuing process of envisioning.

The story each person tells has great significance, and the qualities of telling are important. The writers I have quoted tell us

that storytelling can be an art of healing and that listening is also an act of attention, as Elaine Jahner says, that is as creative and beautiful as well. Together the audience and storyteller make something new in the world, a "narrative potential" that is never lost whilst it carried in the memory of both participants. Storytelling is world making, even in the modern world of print. Memory can maintain and fuel this process of creating and definition, easing us out of a product-oriented background. Moreover, cultural stories, attitudes, and myths make us who we are and who we may become. New stories extend the directions of that becoming when the story is faithfully told. This is a continually flourishing event, as Jahner states:

The novel is a narrative genre well-suited for examining how the traditional ways of knowing function in a multi-cultural world where the meanings of narrative are often twisted and tangled. The novel can accommodate enough detail and can juxtapose enough different kinds of narrative to show how it is possible to untangle our responses to different ways of knowing and follow them to their experiential roots. For that is what event is, a primary experience of sources of knowledge shaped not by logical concepts but by the action of story. Such an experience requires of readers a special act of attention that combines the oldest mode of attentiveness—the mythic mode—with a contemporary one shaped by our successive experience with novels.⁵³

Silko and Hulme show us that stories continue, Ihimaera tells us the flowering is occurring now. Whites need to continue to let that happen, to attend and learn to recover trust in stories, trust in process and change. Michael Dorris refers to the varied Native American literatures in a similar context: "The discovery of just one other way of being and becoming human puts to rest forever, for that discoverer, the destructive myth of a Euro-American monopoly on civilization, or language, or humanity."⁵⁴ Those who make that discovery

⁵³ Jahner, E. "An Act of Attention: Event Structure in *Ceremony*" *American Indian Quarterly*, (5: 1979, pp. 37-46) p. 46.

⁵⁴ Dorris, M. "Native American Literature in an Ethnohistorical Context" *College English* (41: 2, October 1979, p. 147-61.) p. 157.

through literature and direct experience face things as they are, rather than the reality government tries to place on the destiny of indigenous people. Jahner explains that the emphasis on the experiential is on "how one comes to know things... with feeling how actions have meanings that live and grow according to the many different ways human beings have of knowing about them."⁵⁵

There is continuity in event and story, a continuity charted by memory. Remembrance is an act of praise and power. In *Ceremony* and *the bone people* Silko and Hulme contribute to a continual woven synthesis that nurtures memory and diversity.

⁵⁵ Jahner, p. 46.

stories: it is a process of outward conduct, and personal recollection and reflection. Such a process sustains story, life and identity. Memory, as the source of recollection and therefore conduct, is the determining basis for present behaviour and future outcome. This is a thesis apparent in *Ceremony*. As Silko reveals to us in the opening pages of the novel, memory created the story we hold in our hands, a story now entrusted to the reader. In reading we therefore participate in an act of continuance that leads us, along with the characters, to an understanding of the qualities and possibilities of remembrance.

On the first page of *Ceremony* Silko is explicit about her own role as the channel for an older story that made the earth:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman,
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears.

She thought of her sisters,
Nau'ts'ity'i and I'tcts'ity'i,
and together they created the Universe
this world
and the four worlds below.

Thought-Woman, the spider,
named things and
as she named them
they appeared.

She is sitting in her room
thinking of a story now

I'm telling you the story
she is thinking.²

Over the first four pages of *Ceremony*, Silko introduces the reader to the importance of memory as it relates to storytelling. From the start, it is clear that we as readers, together with the narrator, share responsibility for the proper outcome and understanding of the

² Silko, L. M. *Ceremony* (New York: Viking, 1977; Penguin, 1986, 262 p.) p. 1. From now on citation will occur in the text.

narrative. In effect, what we enter is a world of creative power. Thought is shaped and uttered by the primary creative being Ts'its'tsi'nako, and becomes tangible reality. Story becomes reality, and reality is subsequently shaped and channelled anew through the storyteller. Silko extends these strands of memory and creation to include the reader at the end of her opening poem: "I'm telling you the story/ she is thinking." The act of reading itself is thus part of the ceremony and the creation of "this world." Silko, in a letter to James Wright, the poet, explains: "the stories grew out of the land as much as we see ourselves as having emerged from the land [at Laguna.]"³ In *Ceremony*, her protagonist Tayo journeys through what Linda Hogan has described as the "eternal" nature of story, and he walks the enduring land, towards total remembrance of each.⁴

By invoking a Laguna creation myth at the opening of her novel, Silko begins with an act of sacred remembrance that places herself, her story, and the reader in a dense traditional context, offering us numerous insights and entry into a complex belief system.

Ts'its'tsi'nako, as the primary Laguna deity, both represents and is the power of memory and creative becoming. Her thought is the basis of reality: "whatever she thinks about/ appears." As cited in the opening poem, the trio of sisters create all physical and spiritual reality: "this world,/ and the four worlds below." The inextricably linked power of thought and language is predicated in the very existence of things: "as she named them/ they appeared."

³ Silko, L. M. and James Wright *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace*. Letters edited by Anne Wright. (Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 1986. 108p.) p. 24.

⁴ Hogan, Linda, in Coltelli, L. *Winged Words. American Indian Writers Speak*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 211p.) p. 72. Hogan states: "I realize now that the stories are eternal. They will go on as long as there are people to speak them. And the people will always be there. The people will listen to the world and translate it into a human tongue. That is the job of the poet."

The power of creation and memory is fundamental to the storyteller's role. As Thought-Woman creates the world initially, everything else that follows is sourced in her first thoughts; therefore language and reality are gifted to us from a layered and woven context indicative of the density of memory. Memory becomes the means for honouring present reality. Creativity and memory persist as a record of the Creatrix's imagination.

When Silko cites Spider Woman's thoughts, "I'm telling you the story/ she is thinking," she includes the reader in this ancient sourced transmission of thought, creation and recollection. In doing so, Silko places the responsibility for creation jointly upon the reader and Ts'its'tsi'nako, and defines the act of remembrance as participation. For Silko, participation necessarily invokes the original spiritual creative forces, the storytellers (like herself and the healers in the novel), together with the audience/reader. As *Ceremony* demonstrates, storytelling is a constantly evolving web of recollection and remembering. Thus the novel reflects an integral facet of Laguna belief that potentially includes the audience.

In *Ceremony*, in a poem of that name on the second page, the importance of remembrance is borne out and reinforced. This poem outlines the way memory, by preserving stories, simultaneously preserves the customs of a people and encourages creative conduct. The male speaker intimates that stories "are all we have to fight off/ illness and death", thereby indicating memory as crucial for the very survival of the people. Silko also introduces the reader to the role of memory as a source of creative power: "'You don't have anything/ if you don't have the stories.'" Since illness and death are as omnipresent as creative life this protection is necessary. "Their evil" defines and demands the stories of protection, introducing the reader

to a struggle between the destructive and constructive forces: “they try to destroy the stories/ let the stories be confused or forgotten.” As readers, initially, we are uncertain who “they” are. This adds a dimension of intrigue as we see intention and active effort expended in different ways. “There is life here/ for the people./ And in the belly of this story/ the rituals and the ceremony/ are still growing.” By its very narrative construction, drawing upon layered and woven depths of mythic and affective memory, the novel has its own sustaining power. It draws on the past as a source of insight and continuance.

Because *Ceremony* draws upon its own roots — anterior memory beyond the fixity of the present — it produces a story that embraces and explains all things, thus transcending the reductive view of those who would destroy spirit. In its woven, trans-historical shifts of belief and innovatory textual style, *Ceremony* is example, celebration and affirmation, of the nurturing strength Laguna stories potentially bestow.

Maintaining the fragile balance between positive change and destructive confusion is the primary task of many characters in *Ceremony*. This, as this thesis will demonstrate, is equally true of *the bone people*. In the latter novel, Joe muses in the Prologue, “Maybe there is the dance.... Creation and change, destruction and change.” (*tbp* 3) These same “balances and harmonies” are present in *Ceremony*. (130) Tayo also strives to realise balance in his life.

The protagonist Tayo journeys towards balance through recognising the fluid unities that surround him. As his personal journey demonstrates, stories restore balance to the characters who are willing to grow; stories restore memory and reverence to such lives. And, by extension, Silko shares this process with her readers. Potentially, we become aware of the appropriate means of

accomplishing and sustaining balance. This is emphasised on the novel's third page.

Here, the poem graphically claims space: "'The only cure/ I know/ is a good ceremony,/ that's what she said.'" (3) These four lines are the only ones on the page. This is instructive; it links the remembrance revered in the previous two poems with ideas of recovery. Prophetically it foreshadows the healing process Tayo goes through, a fundamental focus in the novel. The visual gap between pieces allows us a pause, a space to breathe, to comprehend what is in front of us. In a sense these gaps alter our perception of Tayo, drawing him (and us) more fully into the dense traditional context of the Laguna people. The space on the page encourages reflection and attentiveness from the reader.

Emphasising the spaces within and between text, the fourth page of *Ceremony* features a single powerful word: "Sunrise." The gap that follows this word is nearly two pages long. After this gap, we meet the protagonist, Tayo. The first words describe the haunted war veteran and his nightmares. To reach his 'beginning' we travel past the textual gaps and through the dawn, a moment that embraces the worlds of light and dark as surely as it limns the novel. This space also encompasses a transition, from the holistic and intricately ordered universe so carefully depicted on the previous five pages, to Tayo's tangled responses. His ordered world has been swept away in a flood of destructive warfare which has shattered his memory.

The long space on the page is full of the dawning of Tayo's story. And, as the day breaks on Ts'its'tsi'nako's first thoughts, the reader moves from the mythical context of harmony that began the novel into the consciousness of one who will seek it, guided by memory. Tracing the transformative process Tayo remembers, thus creating his

own story, and becomes a part of his people's story. Accordingly, this thesis explores the ways memory offers a coherent base for healing and re-integration.

Four central people, Ku'oosh, Betonie, Night Swan and Ts'eh, guide Tayo towards a memory that counters his initial recollections of displacement. They explain the wider story he contributes to and follows. They return him to ancient memory; this becomes a process that constitutes and re-constitutes Laguna's living history.

When we first meet Tayo he is trapped in a dark memory that blocks out the continuing story of the traditional past and thus limits his life in the present. In many ways Tayo's experience is similar to Simon's in *the bone people*. Like Simon, Tayo is a survivor of horrific experiences. Both are haunted by a sense of unworthiness. Tayo's memories of trauma limit his capacity to realise a vision that springs from an older, more coherent sense of tribal community and belonging. Tayo's process of remembrance helps him understand the power of belief and community.

Tayo is of mixed white and Laguna ancestry, ashamed of his unknown father and Laguna mother who lost herself in alcohol before she died. Loathing his very conception, Tayo is raised by an aunt who makes him aware of his difference. She subtly sets him apart from his uncles Robert and Josiah and cousin Rocky, who treat Tayo warmly. Despite the love from Rocky and Josiah, Tayo is still ashamed of himself in the face of Rocky's ambition in the white world and his own feelings of displacement at Laguna. Caught in between worlds, Tayo has few conscious foundations on which to build a coherent and sustaining memory.⁵ His war service does little to

⁵ For a fuller discussion of mixedblood issues in Native American literature see Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.) "The Very Essence Of Our Lives:

bolster his security.

Whilst in combat in the Philippines, three events occur to compound Tayo's sense of guilt. Tayo images Josiah's face on one of the Japanese prisoners shot by his platoon. Crazy with grief, he is given medication. Later, when he is captured, Rocky is wounded. Trudging through the "smothering dampness" of the jungle, carrying Rocky, Tayo "damned the rain until the words were a chant". (8, 12) When Rocky dies, Tayo feels he has ignored all responsibility. He sees the effects of his transgressions back at Laguna: "he had prayed the rain away and for the sixth year it was dry." (14)

For Tayo, coming home means returning to the land, the community and the past that has created him. His guilt makes him feel displaced. Yet it also reveals an awareness of his wartime transgression. Gathering water at a sacred spring, Josiah had told the younger Tayo that the "'old people used to say that droughts happen when people *forget*, when people misbehave.'" (46, my emphasis) Josiah links memory and conduct with the unfolding balances and forces of the land. In many ways *Ceremony* traces Tayo's "safe return" to the land of his people via memory. (116) Tayo is called "back to belonging.../home to happiness...back to long life" from guilt and the terrible memories of modern warfare. (144) As Paula Gunn Allen argues, "Tayo's illness is a result of separation from the ancient unity of person, ceremony and land, and his healing is a result of his recognition of this unity."⁶ What Allen describes is, in fact, a re-

Leslie Silko's *Webs of Identity*" pp. 167-91. John Purdy provides a fascinating discussion of Tayo's origin in "The Transformation: Tayo's Genealogy in *Ceremony*," *Studies in American Indian Literature* (Vol. 10, No. 3. Summer 1986) pp. 121-133.

⁶ Allen, P. G. "The Feminine Landscape of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986. 311p.) p. 119, and "The Sacred Hoop," p. 60.

integrative process fundamental to Tayo's awareness of the larger world, that of story and memory.

Reaching "back to belonging" to the place in his memory that is secure and continuous, founded in the land and Laguna understanding, involves Tayo in travail. He moves from attending to the influences of the modern world (with its emphasis on status and material prestige) to the older values of his ancestors, sourced in reverent memory. Silko indicates that the way of life Tayo must seek and re-find is found in the process that perpetuates continuance and balance. It is an understanding that nurtures itself because it reveres continuance and change. The spiritual guides Ku'oosh, Betonie, Night Swan and Ts'eh — healers — live in this manner and can help him regain memory. Edith Swan points out that, consistent with the tribal memory Tayo lives in and re-visions, each of the healers possess carefully designed roles: "they tutor Tayo in the ceremonial nature of gender: Identification with men teaches the profile of masculinity through hunting, herding, warfare and curing, while identification with women gives Tayo his social identity by reuniting him with the land, the ultimate artifact of Spider Woman's creative thought."⁷ Throughout the novel, Tayo quests for a ceremony that can restore his memory to its rightful place, central in his life. He needs to be able to regard his memory as an aid and source of power as opposed to simply a cause for blood-drenched nightmare.

To this end, he seeks his place within "the world made of stories, the long ago, time immemorial stories, as old Grandma called them." (95) Tayo needs to become part of the pattern again, to contribute to its celebratory maintenance and survival. "His sickness was only part of

⁷ Swan, E. "Healing via the Sunwise Cycle in Silko's *Ceremony*." *American Indian Quarterly*, (vol. 12: Fall, 1988, pp. 313-28.) p. 313.

something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything.”(126)

In the novel, Tayo's own personal becoming has great significance for his people and their own continuing story. Tayo must come to embrace more than his own ego; his place in the scheme of things will come clear, once the pattern is seen. His “recognition,” as Allen so rightly calls it, affirms an ancient and anterior order and harmony. Recognising the power of sacred, traditional memory strengthens Tayo, because it illuminates his understanding of belonging and his place in community.

Tayo's memory lacks the coherent power to help him do this on his own. He is plagued by nightmares, anxiety, and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress. He lacks a sense of location, which could guide him through his healing. He does not, in fact, even know where to begin. The war has erased his sense of self. Tayo is dissipated because his memory is not anchored:

He could get no rest as long as the memories were tangled with the present, tangled up like coloured threads from old Grandma's wicker sewing basket when he was a child, and he had carried them outside to play and they had spilled out of his arms into the summer weeds and rolled away in all directions, and then he had hurried to pick them up before Auntie found him. (6-7)

Tayo is “tangled” throughout his entire being. His memory is incoherent. He has no sense of direction. Overcome by guilt because of his curses against the rain, Tayo's presence on the land becomes a constant reminder of his own displacement. Feelings of unworthiness and disobedience, at times, overwhelm him. In such “tangled” circumstances, his memory provides no sense of continuity or coherence; events are recalled randomly and float scrambled without an overall guiding pattern. Tayo's life has lost its roots and, consequently, he is adrift in sensations of helplessness. This weakness

and guilt are, in fact, an admission on his part that he has ignored and disturbed a larger pattern, a balance. His feelings and even his physical functions spill over everywhere in a nausea of dislocation:

He could feel it inside his skull — the tension of little threads being pulled and how it was with tangled things, things tied together, and as he tried to pull them apart and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled even more. (7)

Until some vision and sense of unity is restored to him, Tayo's memory will enjoy no coherent context, nor function as a source of regeneration. The traditional context provided by the four healers restores memory by encouraging reverent conduct. Such mindful actions extend from the person to foster community — the larger context in which memory coheres. To fully return there, Tayo must recover both from the war and his Western "cure" of subsequent hospitalisation. Both these experiences have erased his memory, his sense of self and community.

Institutional 'care' in *Ceremony* and *the bone people*.

Ceremony and *the bone people* trace similar institutional responses to memory and community. Both novels depict hospitals as places which fail to acknowledge the characters' needs for community and remembrance. Both novels reveal that the institutions which house Tayo and Simon fail to give sustenance, a sense of place; nor do they acknowledge the community's power to provide the essential will to live. Simon "might as well not be" without Joe and Kerewin, and Tayo's identity is reduced to insubstantial "white smoke" in the hospital, as the land and memory he knows is ignored. The immediate result of this severance from the past is a loss of connection with the present.

As in *the bone people*, *Ceremony* suggests the place of belonging is a place of healing. In Silko's novel healing occurs on physical, emotional and spiritual levels.⁸ *Ceremony* also documents the forces and experiences that hinder Tayo's full return to belonging. Paradoxically, one such force is the supposedly curative experience of hospitalisation, a process which occurs in the context of cultural exclusion.

The hospital staff in *Ceremony* and *the bone people* stress individual recovery on a physical level. They tend to ignore the spiritual needs of the suffering. Simon's most devastating experience

⁸ This is consistent with research findings: "Biomedicine is concerned with objective, scientific management of a pathophysiological process. Ethnomedicine deals subjectively with the whole alteration. In other words, the medical doctor treats the disease while the traditional healer treats the person (who happens to be ill)." A. K. Neuman and P. Lauro "Ethnomedicine and Biomedicine Linking" *Social Science and Medicine* 16, 1982 pp. 1817-1824, quoted in P. Laing and E. Pomare, "Maori Health and the Health Reforms" *Health Policy*, 1994 (forthcoming).

occurs when he is informed he will not be allowed home. The modern institution (in *the bone people*) cannot imagine any vision of family or community that could survive Joe's brutality. It is a testament to the warm and often contrary relationship between Joe and Simon that the child wishes (like Tayo) for a return to self and wider family. The hospital cannot understand the unconditional quality of Simon's love, nor the power of his vision of home.

Simon differs from Tayo in that he has an ally in the system in the person of Sinclair Fayden, the African-American paediatrician. His training and cultural perspective seeks out what is best for Simon, rather than that which will exonerate the hospital or State. He addresses needs: "'why can't they *see* you're missing your home so much?'" (401) Such a statement significantly ranges Fayden on Simon's side, against institutional blindness.

However, the institutional response to such children, on their own, is one of appropriation. They try to sever Simon's roots with the past. The State knows 'best.' What Simon needs is "a good stable place to grow up in, a place of kind authority, a normal background at last" says the head nurse, unable to accept his need to return to the two people who have, for the first time in his remembered life, accepted him, the two who have become home. "Can't he understand as we do that 'home' means, 'When am I better?' — not really going back to that, that ghoul." (394) Home has become a state of isolated (and purely physical) survival, rather than a place of shared warmth, and recalled experience. The hospital attempts to dis-place Simon's vision. "Holy ghost it's easy to talk with him...where'd Lachlan get this shit about him being easy to talk to *all* the time?" (399) muses Fayden, aware of the reductive thought prevalent in the hospital system. Together with Kerewin, Fayden is one of the few strangers to

appreciate Simon's character and complexity.

Both Tayo and Simon face institutional indifference to their particular communally-based needs. The decisions made in this context stem from the western view of healing which prioritizes diagnoses and symptoms over the spiritual and emotional recovery of the person. Catherine Rainwater summarises the institutional response with regard to Tayo:

Tayo's recovery entails a struggle over the meaning of illness and health, and over Tayo's ultimate definition of his body as Indian or white 'space.'

While Tayo lies ill in the veterans hospital, the white doctors 'yell' at him because he does not define himself 'correctly,' according to their psychological model of self. They see him as a particular 'individual' with the specific symptom of 'battle fatigue.' In... Western medicine, [the] aim is to make the symptoms disappear, not to waste time thinking about the metaphysical cause of the malady.⁹

Memory probes the cause of metaphysical illness. When the hospital seeks to isolate Tayo, and further isolate his cause of sickness, a reductive process begins to "drain" off his memory and desire for wholeness. (C 15) His sickness is partially a consequence of his terror at dishonouring memory. Firstly he imaged Josiah in the corpses he faced in the war; then he cursed the rain. In the blank neutrality of the hospital, the process of healing involves erasing the product of disease. Whether it be a broken arm or battle fatigue, we observe that little attempt is made to address illness through attending to cause. The hospital fails to heal Tayo because it tries to shut out memory and related issues; it attempts to replace Tayo's story.¹⁰ The limited

⁹ Rainwater, C. "The Semiotics of Dwelling in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony" *The American Journal of Semiotics*, (vol. 9: 2-3, 1992, p219-40), p. 229. Rainwater cites E. J. Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine*, Oxford, 1991.

¹⁰ Rainwater's citation shows that now various hospitals cursorily regard the metaphysical dimensions present in their role. For a New Zealand focus on this area, and a clinical discussion of the traditional dyad somewhat similar to that between Betonie and Tayo and Joe and Tiaki see P. S. Sachdev, "Maori Elder — Patient Relationship as a Therapeutic Paradigm" *Psychiatry* (52: 4, 1989) pp. 393-403.

nature of his 'cure' is clear when Tayo is released from hospital when he encounters once again the invisibility that characterised his hospital stay. Collapsing, he owes no real debt of gratitude to the doctors: "his last thought was how generous they had become, sending him to the L. A. depot alone, finally allowing him to die." (17) The veteran hospital does nothing to restore Tayo's healing memories of the past; rather, it promotes stasis. He remains in suspended animation: "there was no pain, only pale, pale gray of the north wall by his bed." (C 15) He inhabits the North: this is the Laguna direction of winter, sometimes characterised by hardship or stasis, another blank neutrality.

In both novels, each character responds similarly to the loss or denial of memory. Tayo's stay in hospital is a void; his frozen state is similar to Simon's (cited earlier) when he was told he would not be returning home. Simon creates a wall and becomes a "wooden child". (*tbp* 396) What ultimately awakens Simon is Fayden's acknowledgment that Kerewin and Joe are important; Fayden offers to help Simon, and thereby affirms his need, memory, and a sense of community. He gives Simon a strategy to escape the prospective foster care and acknowledges the change in Simon, textually indicated when he makes his offer: "None of the brittle defiance, and none of this horrid apathetic docility we've been getting lately either. Alive again..." (*tbp* 398)

Tayo's relationship with his doctor is different. Tayo exists in a fog, a drug-induced haze. When he does speak to the doctor, he uses phrases of profound disconnection: "'He can't talk to you. He is invisible. His words are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound.'" (C 15) We see the consequences of emotional amnesia at an early point. His body, and in particular his tongue, are normally

used for the recollection and transmission of memory. It is, therefore, significant that his tongue has become invisible and wordless. He has become a third-person to his memories and hopes, severed from both. And thus he has no sense of communal or individual selfhood.

Hospitals resist communal approaches to healing and stress individual recovery. Staff ignore Simon's request to return home, and forbid ritual medicine for Tayo. The institutional response saps Tayo of his memory and sense of community: "Their medicine drained memory out of his thin arms and replaced it with a twilight cloud." (C 15) Much of Tayo's hospital experience is characterised by this twilight neutrality and paucity of feeling. He forgets the past, the world outside becomes "a glimpse of green leaves pressed against the bars of the window. He inhabited a gray winter fog on a distant elk mountain where hunters are lost indefinitely and their own bones mark the boundaries." (C 15) This is a living death: in this situation Tayo is nowhere, trapped between life and death. This is an state which is clearly maintained by the White ideas of wellness, as the medicine man Betonie later ironically comments: "In that hospital they don't bury the dead, they keep them in rooms and talk to them." (123) They perpetuate the stasis Betonie identifies as a product of witchery, of evil.

Both Simon and Tayo experience a return to physical awareness; this in turn, brings a return of memory. Simon "wakens" his body from feeling "fuzzy" and becomes aware of the legacy of Joe's fists. "With a new keen instinct for self-preservation" that focuses his will and is a new and useful defence against "the horror" of his past, Simon quickly quells memories of violence, replacing them with concerns for the whereabouts of Joe and Kerewin. (387) Tayo also recovers some clarity on release. At the train depot in Los Angeles his

body regains "density" and he begins to remember. In the hospital "[t]he smoke had been dense; visions and memories of the past did not penetrate there, and he had drifted in colors of smoke.... It had been a long time since he thought about having a name." (C 15-6) Leaving the blank gap of the hospital, Tayo must again face his fears, without the numbing fog of medication. At the train depot his broken life re-appears:

. . .he cried at how the world had come undone, how thousands of miles, high ocean waves and green jungles could not hold people in their place. Years and months had become weak, and people could push against them, and wander back and forth in time." (18)

Thus, in images of disharmony and fracture, Tayo's entire being and memory is depicted. There is no balance. The narrative conveys fluidity, shifting and interlacing in surges of confusion. Before he meets the healer Ku'oosh, the story shifts back and forth in time, from childhood, to memories of hospital and warfare. Tayo's balancing of memory only re-commences with Ku'oosh's aid. At that point, Tayo's sickness is acknowledged, contextualized within a larger framework of ritual and community. This promises to guide the fragile, re-constituted balance of his memory.

Language and Story: Two Potent Forces in *Ceremony*.

Tayo's Grandma (recalling Grandmother Spider, Thought-Woman) is one of the first people to reach out and begin the necessary process of remembrance that constitutes Tayo's story. It is Tayo's Grandmother that helps him commence healing by acknowledging his need for it and arranging his meeting with Ku'oosh. Since his return from hospital, Grandma has kept her distance from Tayo.

However, the narrator indicates that she has constantly been thinking of him. When Tayo is at his lowest ebb, she is there for him. One morning he wakes crying after dreaming of Josiah. Tayo is, apparently, ready to abandon all hope of progress, ready to abandon his memory:

He cried because he had to wake up to what was left: the dim room, empty beds, and a March dust storm rattling the tin on the roof. He lay there with the feeling that there was no place left for him; he would find no peace in that house where the silence and the emptiness echoed the loss. He wanted to go back to the hospital. Right away. He had to get back where he could merge with the walls and the ceiling, shimmering white, remote from everything. (32)

Tayo seeks a remoteness that eases the loss in the present, because it erases the past. He feels responsible for everything bad at Laguna: the deaths of Rocky and Josiah, and the continuing drought. This is a pivotal point when Tayo comes close to renouncing his identity and responsibility. In each instance he is pulled back from despair by forces or people who will not let him forget his roots, or forget that the story must continue. Language and stories are potential healing forces.

When Grandma reaches out for Tayo, she ensures that the story will continue beyond the despair he is currently trapped in. "She held his head in her lap and she cried with him, saying 'A'moo'oh, a'moo'ohh' over and over again." (33) Grandma uses "the Laguna expression of endearment/ for a young child/ spoken with great feeling and love" locating him in a network of family and tradition that affirms identity and belonging.¹¹ Her decision to summon a medicine man is based on her awareness of optimum health: the careful balancing of all things within and around a person. She

¹¹ Silko, L. M. *Storyteller*, (New York: Seaver Books, 1981. 278 p.) p. 34. Silko also uses the term later in *Ceremony*, describing the priests who paint a she-elk upon a cliff finish and cry: "'A'moo'oooh! A'moo'oooh! you are so beautiful! You carry all that life! A'moo'oooh! With you the cliff comes alive.'" p. 230.

recognises that Tayo is out of rhythm with his environment, that inner landscape of memory and feeling, and the outer land that contains the people and their stories. Grandma also knows of the "harmonies" that must be maintained, even in the face of loss or horror. In reaching out for Tayo, and in acknowledging what he needs, his Grandma sets him on the path to recovery. This is a journey, a process and a story with a healing power. Like appropriate conduct, memory can nourish itself on recollection. Land and story combine to create an eternally evolving quest for Tayo. This will accrete over time, through teller and audience, a journey and story sourced in memory, caught in language.

With the traditional priest, healer and storyteller Ku'oosh, Tayo starts to piece his memory together in an appropriate way, by transforming through re-membering. Ku'oosh begins this re-making by describing a cave Tayo used to play in. As Tayo recalls, it is a place of change and recuperation for other creatures: "the snakes went there to restore life to themselves." (35) Ku'oosh begins the healing by returning Tayo to his memory and the land which encompasses it. He returns Tayo to stories, thereby opening the way towards Tayo's own story of healing — one which will become part of the landscape of his people's memory. This is a continuance, a balance of the interrelationship between memory, landscape and language, exemplified by and in Ku'oosh.

Silko's description of Ku'oosh's speech is beautiful, instructive and insightful, like the novel, and much of Tayo's learning within it: "He spoke softly, using the old dialect full of sentences that were involuted with explanations of their own origins, as if nothing the old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it." (34) Here, Ku'oosh's

narrative language extends and deepens the conventional notion of storytelling and language as a static moment without continuance, bearing out Lincoln's assertion of the "interpenetrant" nature of words within the languages of tribal Indians.¹² Each word honours and echoes its own past; even standing alone a word can tell a story.

In the same way that Silko began the novel, Ku'oosh and the other healers in *Ceremony* honour the past of each story, and in each case, every word. Here Silko displays a powerful cultural and psychological awareness of function and precision as it applies to each facet of becoming. The story is born with its own inherent continuance intact and present in retelling, in utterance and re-utterance. If Ku'oosh continues to reverently source the origin of each word, he provides a firm foundation for growth. Richness builds and blends within each story, a linguistic remembrance that makes the story a fractal of becoming.

The manner in which Ku'oosh uses language defines and describes his role. It is his conduct, not his clothing nor appearance which determines his position as medicine man. With the arrival of Ku'oosh in his life, Tayo can no longer afford to ignore the delicate, inexorable unfurling of story:

He hesitated then and looked at Tayo's eyes.
'But you know, grandson, this world is fragile.'

The word he chose to express 'fragile' was filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills where early in the morning the sun became entangled in each filament of web. It took a long time to explain the fragility and intricacy because no word exists alone, and the reason for choosing each word had to be explained with a story about why it must be said this certain way. That was the responsibility that went with being human, old Ku'oosh said, the story behind each word must be told so there could be no mistake in the meaning of what had been said; and this demanded great patience and love. (35-6)

The medicine man uses words as essential components of his

¹² Lincoln, *Renaissance*, p. 44.

healing practice. His story is no blank neutral space but a place indivisible from landscape and memory. Allen explains the reasons for this fragility: "The fragility of the world is a result of its nature as thought. Both land and human being participate in the same kind of being, for both are thoughts in the mind of Grandmother Spider."¹³ Thought is at once all-embracing and, at the same time, liable to tangle. What Ku'oosh refers to are the necessary *connections* that maintain balance and harmony. Patience, love, and remembrance are vital — explaining and integrating constructive behaviour.

The above passage presents Silko's view of language, a Laguna view. It parallels Hulme's description of language as a net, and places the storyteller and her audience in a matrix of continuing becoming orchestrated by Grandmother Spider, Thought-Woman. Thought, woven in the threads of words — interdependent with memory, story and reverence — is a gift from Spider Woman. It aids the people who celebrate her, and where they come from. Language is both communal (linguistic) code and indicator of surfaces — time, place and events. Communal memory gives depth to these words and surfaces. Each word in the Laguna language is an entity with authority — to be used in "a certain way." Authority, (such as embodied and exemplified in Grandmother Spider Woman and the four healers) is legitimised and carried through language with appropriate (positive) conduct.

Laguna will lose presence if its stories, carried in language, are forgotten. Silko encourages characters and readers alike to understand that there is an inseparability between aspects of reality and the language that articulates it: essential components are the primary

¹³ Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 125.

spiritual forces, the Laguna stories, and the storytellers who re-tell the memory of Laguna times for the listeners. For in listening, chronological time defers to story and reconstitutes itself within each audience.

The practise of storytelling regenerates the qualities of love and rightful living. As Ku'oosh demonstrates, memory is living because it places human understanding in an evolving context. Memory provides the relevant reasons for why a word "must be said this certain way." It explains a part of the delicate web of Spider Woman's creation, illuminating the whole through precise placement. The qualities of patience and love that orient words can also favourably influence the conduct in Tayo's life, for he is but one strand in the communal web.

For an hour Ku'oosh details the implications of the word 'fragile'. This task both represents and enhances the importance of memory. Ku'oosh understands the interrelatedness of all things in his awareness that "no word exists alone." Precision is applied to word-choice because such choice influences the story as a whole — reality. By giving his explanations to Tayo, Ku'oosh honours Laguna language and stories, and acknowledges Tayo's place in them. Above all, the passage on the fragility of the world articulates the intention and implication present in stories and storytelling.

The novel's intention and attentiveness to detail in storytelling is in fact central to the Laguna Pueblo world view. Kenneth Lincoln notes the importance of balance and precision, which is also discussed by Alfonso Ortiz. Their critical perception relates closely to Ku'oosh's tending and evolution of language:

Against Tayo's sense of dislocation, place the 'ceremonial attention to boundaries, to detail and order, and to the center,' ideally speaking, in what Alfonso Ortiz sees as the Pueblo world view: 'everything—animate

and inanimate—counts and everything has its place in the cosmos. All things are thought to have two aspects, essence and matter. Thus everything in the cosmos is believed to be knowable and, being knowable, controllable. Effective control comes only from letter perfect attention to detail and correct performance, thus the Pueblo emphasis on formulas, ritual, and repetition revealed in ritual drama. Among human beings the primary causal factors are mental and psychological states; if these are harmonious, the supernaturals will dispense what is asked and expected of them. If they are not, untoward consequences will follow just as quickly, because within this relentlessly interconnected universal whole the part can affect the whole, just as like can come from like. Men, animals, plants and spirits are intertransposable in a seemingly unbroken chain of being.¹⁴

This extended quotation explicates an ethos of the novel: the evolution and continuance of stories ensures “life.../for the people” partly because of the “great patience and love” inherent in the telling. (2, 36) These are two forces that are, in their own right, helpful. But, in the context of Laguna storytelling and history, “great patience and love” uphold a threatened belief system, “the world” known to Ku’oosh intimately. The above passage also illuminates the special nature of Silko’s role as she perceives it. Each page of the novel is, in its comprehensive web of understanding, illuminating the ever evolving nature of creativity, a reverential “offering.” It does not have a ‘final’ page:

Sunrise,
accept this offering,
Sunrise.

Empowered and re-membered, we are now readers in a position of heightened awareness. Like Tayo, we begin to realise the inherent memory in this story as we learn of its own origins and scope. Just as

¹⁴ Lincoln, *Renaissance*, p. 283-4 quotes A. Ortiz, “Ritual Drama and the Pueblo World View” in *New Perspectives on the Pueblo*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972). p. 143.

Ku'oosh explains the origins of each word, Silko also places her story in the context of stories that have gone before. The offering is made; the story continues. Continuance and survival are maintained through attendant memory.

Betonie: Keeper of Vision and Memory.

Latent in the present, the stories of the future are cared for through retelling. Their retelling ensures new stories will emerge. Ts'its'tsi'nako "named things and/ as she named them/ they appeared." (1) A similar process of evolution and protection is carried out by the Navajo medicine man Betonie. Like Ku'oosh, Betonie is mindful of the precise nature of interdependence. His power lies in the special vision of balance and adjustment he has carried through generations. Where Ku'oosh reveres things as they are, Betonie foresees and thus forges things as they will become. He is the shaper of process, ensuring it survives beyond any obstacle in time or culture. Edith Swan summarises the important role male characters play in locating Tayo in the spiritual memory that orients him and his people:

Men of power wear blue clothing or turquoise jewellery, and smell of mountain sage. They cure, hunt, engage in war and conduct activities to order and strengthen life. They attend to spiritual matters, and combat evil using as their agents the sacred animals of the cardinal directions. Their medicine story is strong. each character harnesses the individual potency from the respective quadrants of the universe. Each is a spiritual mentor, and under their combined tutelage Tayo matures into the diverse labors of men. Collectively, they bestow the esoteric ceremonial knowledge undergirding the foundations of Tayo's religious identity, and represent a holistic, cosmic portrait of masculinity.¹⁵

Swan recognises that Betonie's vision gives him the insight to awaken and guide Tayo into the birth of the vision that constitutes

¹⁵ Swan, E. "Laguna Symbolic Geography and Silko's *Ceremony*" *American Indian Quarterly*, (vol. 12: Summer, 1988, pp. 222-49) p. 240.

the novel.

Betonie and Tiaki Mira, the elder in *the bone people*, share similarities as guardians of ancient wisdom. They understand the interrelated nature of their world of knowledge. Initially, both are regarded with fear and suspicion by the damaged men who are healed with their guidance. Both have been waiting for a certain evolution of events which, if properly cared for, will have an extraordinary effect on preserving and strengthening the world of traditional spiritual reverence and ceremony around them. Such lives are dedicated to the evolution of the correct "balances and harmonies" because they know the story must continue, constructive and precise, or the web disintegrates. (130) Betonie understands the interaction between tradition and identity, homeplace and change. He balances and cares for the continuing evolution of the ceremony his grandparents laid down as well as the contemporary needs of those like Tayo. Like his grandfather Descheeny, Betonie is renowned for healing "the victims of this new evil set loose upon the world." (150) He helps Tayo to return home so he can stand firmly in his battle against this evil that Silko has hinted at. We learn of the balance between good and evil as Tayo approaches the ritual healing with Betonie.

Before Tayo's meeting with Betonie, above the grimy town of Gallup, Silko takes him to the broken world of the homeless. In effect, through Tayo's journey, she shows us one consequence of neglecting or forgetting the story. Gallup's dry riverbed is one choice, just as Betonie's hogan, or sacred house, perched on the hill above the town, represents another.¹⁶ At this point Tayo can choose to ignore the instinct he has of his need for healing, and forget his part in the

¹⁶ Swan, E. "Laguna Symbolic Geography." Footnote 7, p. 248.

web of events and stories that have taken him this far. However, what he sees in Gallup disturbs him. Tayo's memory may be tangled, but he has not forgotten everything. His response underlines the "tangles" of his memory, but not the total erasure of sensed responsibilities.

In Gallup, Indians crouch "outside bars like cold flies stuck to the wall." (107) Willpower is drained amidst the wreckage and the destructive values besieging them. Other Indians who have not been trapped in the place avoid it after dark. It is a place of hardened children: "They found their own places to sleep because the men stayed until dawn. Before they knew how to walk, the children learned how to avoid fists and feet." (109) The reader enters the world of a child, emblematic of people ignored by society. As a writer, Silko will not accept the blinkers that encourage ignorance. As noted, she has told Laura Coltelli of her interest in "finding out similarities in conditions, and yet divergences in responses, of human beings."¹⁷ Her interest echoes Hulme's focus on "the fringe dwellers" and is present in the "divergent responses" of the homeless in Gallup, outcasts in a outcast town. Freedom of expression has been denied them, and now they barely survive. Deprived of the grounding of homeplace, and the warmth and freedom of expression inherent in the nurturing place, they founder.

In Gallup's dry arroyo, the unnamed child obtains what food and shelter he can. His mother must prostitute herself because that is the only way she can remain with her son.¹⁸ His presence lends weight to

¹⁷ Kedgley, *Our Own Country*, p. 106; Coltelli, *Winged Words*, p. 153.

¹⁸ Silko describes the Gallup section of *Ceremony* as "the only surviving part of what I call stillborn novels." (Coltelli, p. 140). Paula Gunn Allen and Louis Owens name the boy as the young Tayo (p. 95 and 180 respectively) whereas Lincoln, calling the child Tayo's "nameless bastard double," sees this namelessness as an asset: "The strength of the novel's sensitivity lies in knowing tragedy, even while the story looks

our imagined understanding of Tayo's early childhood, before he was sent to live with Josiah. In the barren arroyo their memories have been supplanted by the harshness, not the beauty, of their lives.

This reinforces the child's dependence on memories of the past in order to cope with the grim realities of the present. He recalls a time of adequate food and shelter, but he also knows that when the authorities separate him from his mother, as they are wont to do, she will return to him. Memory is all the child can turn to as the meagre reality of his world entangles him. Thus mother and child lead a desperate existence of loss and separation in an environment of thwarted hope. The town will not permit any more growth, as it continues to trap and entangle people in a cycle of poverty that robs the homeless of the powers of sustaining memory, "great patience and love." In effect, the town of Gallup epitomises the most debilitating affects of colonisation. Paula Gunn Allen asserts that traditional peoples "believe that the roots of oppression are to be found in the loss of tradition and memory because that loss is always accompanied by a loss of a positive sense of self. In short, Indians think it is important to remember, while Americans believe it is important to forget."¹⁹ Silko's novel demonstrates that the loss of memory and the denial of justice creates Gallup's homeless — the epitome of the colonised subject. Without connection, they are barely alive and dismissed by police or a harsh winter. In Gallup, the homeless are too desperate simply surviving to challenge insuperable circumstances, dispossession, rootlessness. Constraints incarcerate these dismembered homeless.

away towards the living." (p. 238-9)

¹⁹ Allen, "Who Is Your Mother? Red Roots of White Feminism", *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 210.

Thus, even before reaching Betonie's hogan, Tayo has seen the possible consequences of neglecting the roots of story and the beliefs which sustain and maintain Laguna foundations. Images of deprivation and struggle fill Tayo as he greets the tall old man. Tayo is confused by Betonie's laughter, his sense of penetrating hilarity in the face of such squalor. Betonie doesn't hesitate to explain himself:

'It strikes me funny,' the medicine man said, shaking his head, 'people wondering why I live so close to this filthy town. But see, this hogan was here first. Built long before the white people ever came. It is that town down there which is out of place. Not this old medicine man.' He laughed again...(118)

As Betonie says later, "'my grandmother would not leave this hill. She said the whole world could be seen from here.'" (131)

Before he enters the old hogan, Tayo notes that Betonie has hazel eyes, just like Night Swan and himself. Each of the people he meets is marked by difference. Each lives with it because they have accepted themselves and their roles. They value change and do not fear it. Betonie is no exception. For decades he has worked to maintain a vision of all-embracing wholeness. He believes in balance, indeed he depends on it. All the stacks of boxes in his hogan would collapse if they didn't lean against each other in *just* the right way. As Tayo realises with a kind of dread, "the boxes and trunks, the bundles and stacks were plainly part of the pattern: they followed the concentric shadows of the room." (120) The pattern that Tayo sees is a constant reminder of the interrelationships between all things. As this unity is driven home to him, he comes to see the responsibility of being. He must honour this unity in the face of fear and destruction; he must face all these forces and contribute to the continuing well-being of his land and people. Each time he sees his role, he shies from the task. Betonie is one of the characters who helps him become who he is meant to be, the person he has always been. Their shared ritual

realises what is latent, waiting to be brought into conscious life.

Again, like the opening of the novel and Ku'oosh's attention to connection and origin, Betonie draws Tayo deeper into his own web of memory, synthesising the events of ritual and story to help Tayo see the links between things, rather than his present dis-membered tangle.

As Betonie stresses, this re-membling and be-coming "must be cared for" and requires risk: "The people must do it. You must do it." (130, 125) His actions have had a wide impact on the fragile world he is a part of. Tayo attempts to push off the knowledge of responsibility with the beliefs of the white hospital. Yet Tayo's own truth, his people's truth, will emerge, because he has never forgotten the past. The past guides him, just as it does Simon in *the bone people*. The intricate web of memory is within both characters. But every time Tayo makes a new connection for himself, he moves closer to his own story of becoming, lived out of (and as part of) his peoples' stories; he re-connects broken links through remembrance.

With Betonie, the potential of Tayo's memory and responsibility in the present appears awful:

There was something large and terrifying in the old man's words. He wanted to yell at the medicine man, to yell the things the white doctors had yelled at him — that he only had to think of himself, and not about the others, that he would never get well as long as he used words like 'we' and 'us.' But he had known the answer all along, even while the white doctors were telling him he could get well and he was trying to believe them: medicine didn't work that way, because the world didn't work that way. His sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything. (125-6)

Tayo's vision is a healing one, a unity of existence. The vision has always been with him; he has always been part of creation, part of the story. The more he belongs, the more powerful the story becomes. Betonie helps Tayo to see that responsibility of being is displayed in one's contribution to this "fragile" world of community, thought, and

reverence.

In one scene, Betonie and Tayo have been seated under the hogan's sky-hole for some time. The old man is explaining the events that have influenced the world, and Tayo's place and role within those events, the stories and the land. He comments to Tayo: "long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began....You see, in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing." (126) His description of change recalls "the intricacies of a continuing process" Ku'oosh evoked when he used the word for "fragile." It is this fragility that has brought Tayo to the circle of sunlight beneath Betonie's sky-hole, as he seeks "something great and inclusive of everything." Now, as Tayo's journey of remembrance continues, he must live his own ancient yet changing story, so he too can retell, adding to the current of the people. Drawing on the wisdom of his grandmother, Betonie tells him why this is so:²⁰

'At one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then. But after the white people came, elements in this worlds began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies. I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong.

'She taught me this above all else: things which don't shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery people want. Witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth. But it has always been necessary, and more than ever now, it is. Otherwise we won't make it. We won't survive. That's what the witchery is counting on: that we will cling to the ceremonies the way they were, and then their power will triumph and the people will be no more. (126)

This passage elaborates the respect accorded to women, change

²⁰ Allen discusses the way tribal narratives embrace all characters, without consistent foregrounding. *The Sacred Hoop*, pp. 230-40. Silko has said "...ultimately the whole novel is a bundle of stories." Coltelli, p. 141.

Likewise, Maryanne Dever explores Hulme's decentred narrative: "the task of establishing coherence increasingly shifts to the reader, whose responsibility it becomes to gradually reconstruct the story." "Violence as *lingua franca*: Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*" *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1989), pp. 23-35. p. 25. This responsibility as pattern-seeker is present for the reader of *Ceremony*, in its first fifty pages, decreasing as Tayo learns throughout the narrative, as Thomas Benediktsson suggests in "The Reawakening of the Gods: Realism and the Supernatural in Silko and Hulme" *Critique* Vol. 33: 2pp.121-31. p. 132.

and creativity in Laguna and Navajo thought. It also gives emphasis to the power of ritual. Betonie's blueprint ensures flexible change; he reveres the real purpose of ceremony and tradition rather than embalming it in dogma. Whether they are songs, dances or stories, they become new receptacles for knowledge, a viable means of transmitting experience in a form relevant to and strong enough for the present. Memory is not static. Instead, it adapts and provides wherever and whenever necessary, sustaining and maintaining, implementing and integrating the appropriate story or ceremony, past and current.

The two novels indicate that the forces of memory and community have more beneficial influence on the needy than any hospitalisation. Each time Tayo desires the blank disconnection of the hospital, memory intervenes, keeping him aware of the responsibility of living in harmony, maintaining the balance, accepting himself as a Laguna person. He cannot afford to ignore memory and ceremony any longer.

In an earlier scene, when uncle Robert says the medicine men have called him, Tayo desires invisibility. But the wisdom of the elders is too strong and he relents: "He would let them take him — whatever they wanted, because they were right. They had always been right about him." (106) Remaining honest in the face of lies and the temptation to forget, Tayo cannot live in the liquor-swilled world of his fellow veterans, "where the past, even a few hours before suddenly lost its impact." (234) Tayo knows he is part of the story. This truth, initially, is his fear: "It only took one person to tear away the delicate strands of the web, spilling the rays of sun into the sand, and the fragile world will be injured. Once there had been a man who cursed the rain clouds, a man of monstrous dreams." (37-8) When

Tayo sees interconnection as a source of power, and not guilt, he begins to heal; with help he sees his own web of memory.

Fundamental to Tayo's healing process are the interlinked rituals that draw power from the mythic sources present in the first pages of *Ceremony*. They bring sustaining memory into Tayo's present. These past and current points of awareness forge his inner links with tribal memory. In a pivotal scene Tayo goes through a Scalp Ceremony, or Navajo Ghost Way, designed to purify the soldier by bringing him fully home.²¹ The Scalp Ceremony, is presented in poetic form, thereby emphasising the older, different space of oral tradition. The words emerge from the larger space on the page, materialising out of a seemingly blank area that actually limns and defines the words present. As well as the words having their own power, readers are drawn to the space that surrounds them.

They had things
they must do
otherwise
K'oo'ko would haunt their dreams
with her great fangs and
everything would be endangered.
Maybe the rain wouldn't come
or the deer would go away...

The flute and dancing
blue cornmeal
and hair-washing.

All these things
they had to do.

(37-8)

Following this earlier passage, Tayo is given blue cornmeal and

²¹ Swan, E. "Laguna Symbolic Geography and Silko's *Ceremony*" *American Indian Quarterly*, (vol. 12: Summer, 1988, pp. 222-49) and "Healing via the Sunwise Cycle in Silko's *Ceremony*." *American Indian Quarterly*, (vol. 12: Fall, 1988, pp. 313-28.) P. G. Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986. 311p.) John Purdy, "The Transformation: Tayo's Genealogy in *Ceremony*." *Studies in American Indian Literature* (Vol. 10, No. 3. Summer 1986) pp. 121-133. These works present detailed and appropriately informed discussion of the traditional aspects and patterns that shape *Ceremony*.

Indian tea, which Ku'oosh leaves for him. But, unlike Tayo's Laguna ancestors, warriors in the white-man's war need new ceremonies adapted to the present. Tayo must help shape a new ritual or, as Ku'oosh explains, the people will suffer: "'There are some things we can't cure like we used to... not since the white people came.... I'm afraid of what will happen to all of us if you and the others don't get well,' he said." (38) This is why Tayo must become part of a new ceremony that connects with the past.

Tayo's journey through land, memory, and story is an extended purification process, one paralleled by the traditional narrative of spirit-guides, Hummingbird and Fly, who weave and mirror their mythic story of re-membering through the novel.

*

Every day Betonie must plan and counter shifts in evil, the very shifts that can drive the world to apocalypse. If the ceremonies are not kept strong the people "won't make it." Reverence begins with the people, but it extends beyond them: the ritual is the cure that is "great and inclusive of everything."

Betonie comments on the anger Tayo feels. Like Joe in *the bone people*, Tayo is crippled by "foreign images." (*tbp* 345) Betonie explains the evildoers planned the frustration, guilt and anger. Whites become ignorant agents of evil, deluded by false ideas of power. Betonie points to the sacred mountain Tse-pi'na, Mount Taylor: "'They only fool themselves when they think it is theirs. The deeds and papers don't mean anything. It is the people who belong to the mountain.'" (128) Tayo is already home. Betonie suggests disapproval at his illegitimate mixed-blood is of little real

consequence: “‘Nothing is that simple,’ he said, ‘you don’t write off all the white people, just like you don’t trust all the Indians.’” He quickly dismisses the pride of social appearance. Belonging is encouraged by returning home in every way. Betonie now takes Tayo through a spiritual returning. On the page it is represented through a shift in textual form, a shift relevant to both the character’s and the reader’s memory.

At every moment of transition between the past and the present, there is a space. Within the prose narrative this is a subtle shift, signified by a change in tense or a new paragraph. When the prose shifts into the format of spoken story however, the gap is more pronounced, as in the previous shift to description of Laguna warrior protocol. The reader is faced with a brief space on the page which I imagine as an intake of breath, a gathering of the powers of memory that coalesce in the ancient story that is being relayed. Through this gap we return to a spatial recollection of the poems that opened the novel with their reverent sense of the mythic context of memory.

Through her textual shifts between prose and poetry, Silko slips the reader into a space between the past and the present. This is not an ideological gap but rather a timeless continuity of story and spirit. As the old stories are told, their pattern and impact influences the evolution of the present. For although the subject matter may change, elements of the ancient character’s experience remains in the present, reminiscent of the eternal continuity symbolised by spirals. Silko’s woven narrative and lack of chapter breaks attests to and reflects this continuity, as James Ruppert explains:

This lack of expected breaking of the flow of the prose...discourages the reader from imposing a strict chronological order on the narrative, thus reinforcing the perception that the novel is a simultaneous, unified moment that circles out like the waves around a rock dropped in a quiet pond,

rather than a linear progression of moments.²²

Another critic, David Hailey, suggests that "invisible characters seem to move through the text, carrying with them totems of goodwill and evil." These invisible characters appear in each poetry section if the reader graphically connects the outlines of the text. Thus the reader performs part of the ritual of memory, past and present, entering a space of continuity. For example, the representation of the spirits appear on the page in the form of a Spider Maiden on the opening poem of the novel. As Hailey goes on to explain, "Silko fills *Ceremony* with a new dimension of conceptual life. She adds more stories, being lived under the stories that are lived on the surface."²³ No gap in *Ceremony* is ever empty, no memory is ever truly lost whilst these spirit-helpers participate in the unfolding of the stories, just as Silko affirms: "by remembering you are aware that no person is ever truly lost once they have been in our lives and loved us, as we have loved them."²⁴ Tayo's journey through memory (and the reader's) is deepened by the apprehension of resonant links between past and present existent in the poems on the page and the space that surrounds them.

Tayo comes closer to this knowledge as he undergoes his ceremony with Betonie and his assistant Shush. Shush has "something remote in his eyes..." It turns out he has been rescued by

²² Ruppert, James "The Reader's Lesson's in *Ceremony*," *Arizona Quarterly*. (Tucson: University of Arizona, Winter 1986, pp. 78-85) p. 80. [Quoted in D. Hailey Jr, "The Visual Elegance of Tsi'its'tsi'nako and the Other Invisible Characters in *Ceremony*." *Wicazo Sa Review* (6:2, 1990 pp. 1-6).]

²³ Hailey, "Visual Elegance" Hailey says "if one draws a line from the 's' in 'She thought...' past the 'T' in 'Thought-Woman...', on past the 'I' in 'I'm telling...', one draws a torso shape. If, on the other hand, one chooses to connect the 't' in 'this world.' the shape becomes arachnid." pp. 3, 6.

²⁴ *Delicacy*, p. 29.

medicine men from the company of bears. When initially, Betonie sees Tayo's wary response to his assistant, he advises him of the larger context around and within him — once again a context of land, memory, and story:

He pointed in the direction the boy had gone. 'Accidents happen, and there's little we can do. But don't be so quick to call something good or bad. There are balances and harmonies always shifting, always necessary to maintain. It is very peaceful with the bears; the people say that's the reason human beings seldom return. It is a matter of transitions, you see; the changing, the becoming must be cared for closely. You would do as much for the seedlings as they become plants in the field.' (130)

Shush's story of re-location and retrieval mirrors the nature of the ancient stories within the prose narrative of the novel.²⁵ Each story brings an older time and older land into being: Shush does not seem to acknowledge the lights in the town, or the campfire. Like Tayo, Shush is still being led home. Yet the "older" land is still the one Tayo stands within. Land, memory and story embrace *all* the stories of the novel, filling the space on the page with an abiding continuity. The stories give *Ceremony* a density, evoking the power of memory and the traditions of the Laguna Pueblo.

The rituals of retrieval Tayo and Shush undergo are recounted after a textual shift in sinuous poetic form. The shift in style is important here as in other parts of the novel. It emphasises the psychic and spiritual space Tayo enters to retrieve a sense of ancestral belonging. Referring to Shush's return from his life with the bears, Silko explains that rescuing one called away is a complicated task:

They couldn't just grab the child
They couldn't simply take him back

²⁵ Several kinds of capture and retrieval are explored in Silko's poem "Story From Bear Country" where bear priests rescue a man who wanders into "a canyon of stillness" — Bear territory: "The problem is/ you will never want to return./ Their beauty will overcome your memory." The narrator finally places herself in the position of the luring spirit creatures, calling the man (and the reader) into the new world of the poem. *Storyteller*, reprinted in *Delicacy*, pp. 12-15.

because he would be in between forever
and probably he would die.

They had to call him
step by step the medicine man
brought the child back.

(130)

Rescuing the child forms the basis of the story that precedes Tayo's ritual with Betonie. Tayo can neglect his relationship with the earth, and his people by succumbing to alcoholic amnesia, or maintain the tenuous links of story and memory. He too must return *home* so that the elders can re-member him as part of the tribe. This involves locating himself in a matrix of events and changes that together contribute to a sense of personal and tribal cohesion.

The ritual Betonie has created for Tayo is described amidst other similar stories of retrieval. Firstly we read of Shush, and his returning. It is his very remoteness that makes him an ideal helper, for he knows what it means to cross into other worlds. We see that Tayo's Ghost Way dance ceremony is consistent with the tales of rescue from the spirit animals Coyote and Bear that precede it. This ceremony Betonie conducts for Tayo uses the same sacred pattern of hoops and sand paintings present in the story of the rescue of the man from Coyote. As in that story, Tayo is helped by four healers, and Betonie, the second, begins by calling him back with a sand painting of beauty, calling him to "return belonging to your home." (143)

As in the communal nature of traditional storytelling and ceremony, no one character in this passage is completely dominant. Each simply appears when the appropriate moment comes. The ceremony is based in the ancient tales of capture that precede it. So we learn much about Tayo's own process of returning and purification from the stories that attend his re-membering. This integrative aspect

of the process-based nature of oral tradition, drawing participants into an ancient "web" of memory is examined by Paula Gunn Allen:

In the western mind, shadows highlight the foreground. In contrast, in the tribal view the mutual relationships among shadows and light in all their varying degrees of intensity create a living web of definition and depth, and significance arises from their interplay. Traditional and contemporary tribal arts and crafts testify powerfully to the importance of balance among all the elements in tribal perception, aesthetics and social systems.²⁶

This process, in Silko's hands, shows us many characters, such as Tayo's fellow veterans Harley and Leroy. They are caught between the onslaught of western technology and belief and their ancestral ways which have perennially sustained communities. Betonie's fundamental role as guide and healer draws Tayo into the traditional understandings he knew little of as a child; he helps Tayo make the choice between a world characterised by sustaining tradition or modern neutrality, thereby pointing Tayo towards the kind of conduct becoming of a guardian of memories and stories.

Betonie shares his vision with Tayo, who comes to see the truth of his wisdom. It is a wisdom that guides and shapes the novel. Betonie's vision is shared by Silko, and Tayo's growth throughout the novel is charted by the increasing understanding he has of the "balances and harmonies" that exist, a state of flux between divergent forces, forces that both Tayo and those in *the bone people* come to appreciate and embrace in their own lives. The "dance" and the "transitions" Joe and Tayo respectively come to appreciate are made clear. Betonie's effectiveness as caretaker depends upon an achieved understanding of interrelationship by all concerned.²⁷

²⁶ Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 244.

²⁷ The attention given to seedlings is as valid and important as that given to a person. In their consistent awareness of memory, as an eternal and evolving force, tribal poets, like the healers in the novel, are owned by story in the same way that "the people belong to the mountain" Tse-pi'na. These poets, Lincoln states "...regard rhythm, vision, craft, nature, and words as gifts that precede and continue beyond any

Life and memory in all its forms exists in and amongst the land, and the language that nourishes the human as Silko explained, "because after all, the stories grow out of this land."²⁸ Betonie is shaman, song-poet and storyteller; he sees the transitions evident in the change of pitch in a song, in the unfurling of a leaf or the wheeling of the stars. Storytelling and "becoming" are part of the same process of cyclical continuance that embraces and defines his people. He is restoring this vision of belonging to Tayo, who has become blinded, "enclosed" and silenced by "the thick white skin" hiding the love and grief which open him to life. (229) Betonie, like Ku'oosh, the spirit-woman Ts'eh and the dancer Night Swan, shows Tayo how to attend to memory, story and land.

Betonie's own "great patience, and love" encourages a process of becoming even as it attends to cosmic implications. This is an of the important aspect of *Ceremony's* "offering." The story's own remembrance and resonance is deeply precise. As Alfonso Ortiz indicates, the precision continues to honour and nurture an all-embracing vision of creation. As readers, we are graced with this vision. Its beauty and relevance can reach us through language and imagination. In this sense, the work of indigenous women writers is another cherished form of continuance, a bringing forth of life in story. And yet, as Betonie explains to Tayo, stories have the capacity to destroy.

Tayo still sees the relevance of the ceremony; he does not resist

human life. The people are born into and die out of a language that gives them being. Song-poets in this respect discover, or better, rediscover, nature's poems. They never pretend to have invented a "poetic" world apart from nature, but instead believe they are permitted to husband songs as one tends growing things; they give thanks that the songs have chosen them as singers." *Renaissance*, p. 44.

²⁸ *Delicacy*, p. 24.

the wisdom it brings: "there were no boundaries; the world below and the sand paintings inside became the same that night. The mountains from all directions had been gathered there that night." (145) However, despite the exhortations to "return belonging to your home" the ceremony cannot entirely cope with the new wars, weapons and witchery: "All kinds of evil were still on him." (143-4) These remain because the Indian veterans have seen "what the white people had made from the stolen land." (169) Like Joe in *the bone people*, the veterans become "hamstrung by foreign images." (*tbp* 345) The consequences of this awareness are intolerable. Yet the majority of people in power tolerate the past in much the same way as they tolerate the injustice of the present: through indifference. However, the Tayo's of this world endure and people like Silko and Hulme testify to their pain, and have the courage to show it: "Every day they had to look at the land, from horizon to horizon, and every day the loss was with them; it was the dead unburied, and the mourning of the lost going on forever." (169)

Despairing at Rocky's death, Tayo wonders "what good Indian ceremonies can do against the sickness which comes from their war, their bombs, their lies?" Betonie explains his helplessness in the context of the evil that was set loose upon the world:

The old man shook his head. 'That is the trickery of the witchcraft,' he said. 'They want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction. But white people are only tools that the witchery manipulates; and I tell you, we can deal with white people, with their machines and their beliefs. We can, because we invented white people; it was Indian witchery that made white people in the first place.' (132)

What follows Betonie's speech is a story of mythical proportion, an origin tale of Silko's making that presents the first witches. They too depended upon storytelling power to set the witchery in motion

and create reality. The witch who begins the tale instructs us "*as I tell the story/ it will begin to happen.*" When this tale is complete many answers have been given. The poetic form of the story is animated by an appetite for pain and death, and yet it shares qualities with the creative power of Thought-Woman, as balance is maintained: the witch who creates the evil chants on, the only witch to tell a story, to tell a race into being. The evil that is detailed begins with the brutality of colonisation and extends onwards to exploitation of the land and people culminating in the "final pattern" of nuclear Armageddon:

*They will take this world from ocean to ocean
they will turn on each other
they will destroy each other
Up here
in these hills
they will find the rocks,
rocks with veins of green and yellow and black.
They will lay the final pattern with these rocks
they will lay it across this world
and explode everything.*

When told to call back this story, the unidentified witch declines: "It's already turned loose. It's already coming." (138) The pre-ordained plan is evolving steadily in the wars around the world and the uranium, dug from Laguna land, which is transmuted into destructive forces. This "final pattern" of atomic blaze will erase the world unless the older stories hold sway. The pattern explains why Tayo must act now to save the planet and all people: he is "part of it" now, and knows the balance will tip towards evil if he forgoes responsibility. It presents a disturbing intention in human destructiveness, and reminds us that for every old healing story, there is one designed to destroy. "'There are balances and harmonies always shifting, always necessary to maintain.'" (130) The story calls us forward for incisive action. Now, as readers, we perceive that responsibility lies with the white western world to end the witchery.

Like memories that extend through bloodline and tribe, the story of evil begins and "can't be turned back." Whites, Betonie says, are responsible for blindly carrying this story through to the apocalyptic conclusion, the final burning pattern, memory's dark counter. This story of terror wipes out land and its populations and, therefore, stories. It becomes an engulfing anti-memory, finding diluted form in Tayo's war nightmares. This kind of "horror" haunts Simon in *the bone people*. Memory can counter this evil. Memory upholds and maintains the stories of "great patience and love" voiced initially by Ku'oosh and Betonie, and carried on by Night Swan and Ts'eh. This is their work.

That work extends an envisioned, balancing story that wards off "illness and death." Each vision of constructive remembrance and healing that Tayo and Simon bring forth, initially began with grandmothers.

Matrilineal Vision and the Evolution of Stories.

[At Laguna] women hold such an important position in temporal matters — the land title, the house, the lineage of the children; the children belong to the mother's line first, and secondarily of course to the father. There is not any of this peculiar Christian, Puritan segregation of the sexes. So there is very much wholeness there.

Leslie Silko²⁹

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman, Grandmother Spider, is the primary "Creatrix" in Indian cosmology, the Grandmother of stories. She conceives and guards visions. This is mirrored in the important role grandmothers fulfil in *Ceremony*.³⁰ As indicated, Grandma plays an important role in initiating Tayo's healing contact with medicine

²⁹ Coltelli, *Winged Words*, p. 139.

³⁰ Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 12-29.

men. Betonie's Grandmother is one of the first to seed a constructive vision to counter the fragmentary forces of colonisation, forces increasingly present in Tayo's embattled life.

Like the kaumatua Tiaki Mira in *the bone people*, the guardian Betonie sustains and continues a vision planted by his grandmother, a vision that must gestate three generations before coming to fruition. Betonie's Mexican Grandmother was outlawed from her village once they saw her green-eyed stare. However, her mixed background provides insights into the evil that is spread around the world, as she tells Betonie: "'It is carried on in all languages now, so you have to know English too.'" (122) Her awareness of the pervasive and hybrid power of evil began early.

With her husband Descheeny she creates stories, for "'she had come for his ceremonies, for the chants and the stories they grew from.'" (150) Still, she had her doubts, as Betonie tells Tayo: "'Sometimes I don't know if the ceremony will be strong enough to stop them. We have to depend on people not even born yet. A hundred years from now.'" (149-50) She is quick to see the scope of the task in which she participates: "'It cannot be done alone. We must have power from everywhere. Even the power we can get from whites.'" (150) Tayo's role in the ceremony is now deepened through Betonie's recital of genealogy; it is apparent Tayo is the key to the resolution of one ceremony that will determine the survival of the new generations of stories. The people tell them and in a sense spring from them. Such is the ongoing spirit of the web of memory: "'This has been going on for a long long time now. It's up to you. Don't let them stop you. Don't let them finish off this world.'" (152)

As Silko has shown us, it is a world nourished by continuing stories. Given that the telling of this story demands "great patience

and love," it is appropriate that love transforms Tayo as he releases and follows the story that preserves the world. (36) The dual activity of honouring old patterns in modern contexts weds story and conduct across time. The "patience and love," needed to keep the story and the people strong, are key forces in Tayo's becoming.

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It is the Mexican woman Night Swan, dancer of great power, who offers the hardy Mexican cattle to Josiah. This plants another seed of continuance that will call Tayo later in life, matching Betonie's vision of cattle, a woman and the mountain. Night Swan and Ts'eh bring this vision into being; they are part of its becoming, and they know it. They know that Tayo is part of the vision too. As Night Swan says to him, "I have been watching you for a long time... I saw the colour of your eyes." (99)

A central place of power and significance in *Ceremony* is the sacred mountain "Tse-pi'na, the woman veiled in clouds." (87) With the guidance of two women who are associated with this blue peak, Tayo journeys to this homeplace. Tayo must make this journey to the central feature of the landscape, symbolic of the power within and around him. Night Swan is the first woman Tayo makes love with. Tayo's recollection of Night Swan's healing presence is described at a point when he acknowledges his previous experience of unity and his present need to deepen that understanding. Her wise, sensual induction into the creative patterns of memory and belonging shape and anticipate the rest of his life.

Within *Ceremony*, the story of Night Swan has its own coherence and placement. We first read of her just after Silko tells us of Fly and Hummingbird's venture to the flourishing fourth world.

We follow Josiah as he falls in love with Night Swan. Silko then shifts to Tayo's recollection of his mother's death, a loss which he has not reconciled within himself. The subsequent scenes revolve around forms of reconnection with the earth, and female presence. Tayo's heartfelt prayer at the enduring spring, performed in the last summer before the war, helps him perceive and understand the wider link between earth, memory and identity:

Everywhere he looked, he saw a world made of stories, the long ago, time immemorial stories, as old Grandma called them. It was a world alive, always changing and moving; and if you knew where to look, you could see it, sometimes almost imperceptible, like the motion of the stars across the sky. (95)

Tayo's reverence connects with the celestial motion Silko later likens to the evolution of story, sourced as it is in the land and the people. Understandably, Night Swan, a figure of balanced perpetual motion, deepens his appreciation of the cycles of continuation. During Tayo's prayerful observation at the spring, we never leave Night Swan. She is present in the blue of the dragonflies and the vitality of the spring itself. She is another facet of that vitality. When the rain begins to fall some hours later, Tayo meets her fully for the first time.

Silko, with her charged and luminous portrayal of Night Swan, presents a picture of female continuance. The reader can imagine her continuing journeys across the plains, single suitcase in hand, touching people deeply through her connection to memory, the ongoing process. "'You don't have to understand what is happening'" she says to Tayo, as he goes, "'[b]ut remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now.'" (100) Her love has bound Tayo more closely to the world and the ceremony that reveres, embraces and maintains it, the web of change and memory.

Night Swan shows Tayo "another kind of daylight." It is a world

of love and continuance as abundant as the "sacred fourth world below," which Hummingbird visits. (82) Night Swan tells Josiah "I remember every time I have danced.'" (84) She recalls every instance when she had tapped into, and revealed a powerful performative source. She personifies the wildest forces of nature, capable of terrifying male spectators with her display: "I knew nothing of minutes or hours. There were changes I could feel; the boards of the dance floor began to flex and glisten.'" (86) Her ability to accept paradox, to become it, is the key to her peace of mind: .

Night Swan perceives and places, Tayo in a larger story; he is "part of it now," and he has a responsibility to carry out. Though he does not guess the nature of this task in that summer before he leaves for war duty, he still recognises the way change occurs within memory. His experience with Night Swan encourages remembrance, as the scene is one he returns to (or that returns to him) in dream "again and again." (99)

As a mixed-blood, Night Swan understands Tayo's alienation, even before he voices his shame. Her response is wise and reassuring, a wisdom borne from acceptance of change:

'They are afraid, Tayo. They feel something happening, they can see something happening around them., and it scares them. Indians or Mexicans or whites — most people are afraid of change. They think that if their children have the same colour of skin, the same color of eyes, that nothing is changing.' She laughed softly. 'They are fools. They blame us, the ones who look different. That way they don't have to think about what has happened inside themselves.' (99-100)

Night Swan then, is a vehicle of change and reconciliation. Remembering important events affirms one's part in them. Night Swan is one of the first people to introduce Tayo to the story, and the vision of life it provides.

This spiritual vitality deepens as the story continues. Meeting Ts'eh takes Tayo to the sacred heart of his people, and to a place of

further regeneration, an inner homeplace Ts'eh shapes through her love for him. As he opens to this love and the changes it brings, he moves closer to realising the visions Josiah and Betonie entrusted in him.

CounterCeremony: Witchery, Colonisation, and Love.

Tayo leaves on a further journey to rescue the Mexican cattle, the cattle that are bred to the land, guided by "the dim memory of direction which lured them always south, to the Mexican desert where they were born." (197) As he embarks, he muses on his involvement, and reveals an impressive understanding of his role: "there were transitions that had to be made in order to become whole again, in order to be the people our Mother would remember; transitions like the boy walking in bear country being called back softly." (170) As Joe wondered in *the bone people*, "[m]aybe there is the dance.... Creation and change, destruction and change" Both men begin to accept change, rather than imposing stasis on evolution. They contribute to the processes and ceremony's that maintain balance.

The facts of history return to Tayo as he journeys closer to the sacred mountain Tse-pi'na, "the woman veiled in mists."³¹ He is drawn toward the mystery, a gap present in his mind, like the invisible force behind Night Swan's curtain, a unity waiting to be uncovered. He is drawn towards his obscured memory, the memory

³¹ Lincoln notes Tse-pi'na is located northwards near the Keresan mythic place of origin. *Renaissance*, p. 244.

of his Laguna people, as he journeys to Mount Taylor, the Laguna place of emergence. This is where mythic memory breaks into Tayo's personal quest.

Responding to the voices calling him home, he undertakes a gathering process similar to the heroic tale of the Sun who rescues the rain clouds from "That Ck'o'yo Kaup'a'ta the Gambler" a sneaky and bad magical being who has tipped the balance of the seasons and land by stealing the clouds. This story precedes Tayo's meeting with Ts'eh. Just as Sun Man receives guidance from Spiderwoman on bringing his children home, Tayo learns from Ts'eh in his own retrieval and returning.

As the novel continues, Ts'eh Montañño helps him experience insights. She embraces and maintains creative power in her role as healer, lover and spirit-being. Lincoln says "[t]he pan-Pueblo mythic Salt Woman, *Tsi'ty'icots'a*, associated with pure water, is adumbrated in Ts'eh" whereas Hamilton Tyler notes that Salt Woman has "the power to predict the seasons, as well as [being] the giver of salt." He points out "that the Acoma-Laguna stories concerning this spirit [of game - Ts'eh's companion the hunter] are located on or around Mount Taylor."³² Ts'eh's storm-patterned blanket points to her role as one who adjusts seasonal transitions, as Salt Woman does. Her blanket is connected with winter: "patterns of storm clouds in white and gray; black lightning scattered through brown wind." (177) She leads Tayo to the time of regeneration, when leaves fall so they can be replaced. Her house smells of clay and mountain sage like Betonie's hogan. This too is a place of healing.³³

³² Lincoln, *Renaissance*, p. 283; Tyler *Gods*, p. 189, 190, citing Franz Boas, *Keresan Texts*, 238. Her name also echoes that of Thought-Woman *Tsi'its'tsi'nako*.

³³ Ts'eh is also possibly sourced from the Laguna heroine Yellow Woman. Paula Gunn Allen points out that yellow is the colour associated with the Northwest

Ts'eh helps Tayo perceive love in an ever-expanding web that begins with her, shifts to Rocky and Josiah, moves on through the earth and, ultimately, to the stars that have always watched over everything. Memory is the unifying force that enables connection between all these strands. By journeying across the sacred land made of thought and stories, Tayo traverses a ritual path that replicates and realises his awareness of the flourishing and intricate pattern he is within.³⁴

A crucial point in the story is reached when the reader turns the page and sees "Old Betonie's stars" there on a black background. This page is a clear example of the powerful presence of gaps between text and event: it is a moment replete with its own being. Following this portrait of the heavens, we return briefly to the intrepid team of Hummingbird and Fly. They obtain tobacco, the key to their request for the life-saving purification of the town; "these things were complicated" but still they undertake the task. Just as they obtain the key ingredient for their offering, Ts'eh and Tayo make love and so

(Mount Taylor is Northwest of Laguna) and with women. Yellow Woman, Kochinnenako, appears in many tales and plays an important linchpin role in the natural transitions between people and spirits, and different seasons, often preventing or thwarting bad magic. She therefore maintains the appropriate balance that ensures memory and reverence guide Tayo in his response to the physical and spiritual worlds, a mythic figure who maintains the connective links and the transitions in the seen and remembered web of becoming. Allen continues: "Many Yellow Woman stories highlight her alienation from the people: she lives with her grandmother at the edge of the village, for example, or she is in some way atypical, maybe a woman who refuses to marry, one who is known for some particular special talent, or one who is very quick-witted or resourceful. In many ways Kochinnenako is a role model, though she possesses some behaviours that are not likely to occur in many of the women who hear her stories. She is, one might say, the Spirit of Woman." Allen, *Sacred Hoop*, p. 225-6. See also Silko's Yellow Woman stories in *Storyteller*, one of which is reprinted in Allen (ed.) *Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1989. 280p.)pp. 217-29.

³⁴ See Swan, "Healing via the Sunwise Cycle" for a detailed discussion of the traditional directions Tayo maps and affirms, and "Laguna Symbolic Geography" for the intricately placed character sites of this affirmation.

begins another phase in the story. As in his union with Night Swan, scenes of living water accompanies their coupling: life and change enliven image and action.

All that night Tayo dreams of the scattering cattle. When he wakes he follows Ts'eh into the pre-dawn stillness, and breathes fully. It is at the coming of the dawn that he recalls the Ka't'sina (which Allen describes as "powerful messengers who relate the spirit world to the world of humankind and vice versa") on the river at dawn; "the instant of the dawn was an event which in a single moment gathered all things together..." (182).³⁵ He sings a song in praise of the sunrise, joyous at the power spilling everywhere through light and silence. After breakfast he watches Ts'eh as she works with carefully gathered plants and stones, matching blues, yellows and other colours. This indicates to the reader her task as one who ensures that the correct transitions occur. She helps him end the drought and is instrumental in turning vision into reality, as Tayo realises later.

After being with Ts'eh, Tayo sets out for the cattle. Things continue to connect into place in his mind as his physical journey continues: "suddenly Betonie's vision was a story he could feel happening — from the stars and the woman, the mountain and the cattle will come." (186) His responses to key connections unify event, purpose and responsibility to inform the reader of the fragile yet inextricable pattern of events Tayo is part of, drawing us into this web of holistic understanding. He spots the cattle, behind the fence of the White rancher Lee: "a thousand dollars a mile to lock the mountain in steel wire, to make the land his." (188) Or so he would like to think.

³⁵ Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 14.

Cutting through this foreign perimeter which circles Tse-pi'na is a turning point in Tayo's journey, affirming his ownership of the cattle and breaking his indoctrinated belief that "only brown-skinned people were thieves." This act reclaims his feelings and his memory, helping him place events in a truer light.

The lie. He cut into the wire as if cutting away at the lie inside himself. The liars had fooled everyone, white people and Indians alike; as long as people believed the lies they would never be able to see what had been done to them or what they were doing to each other. (191)

"Their lies would destroy this world," thinks Tayo, this "fragile world" of which he has become guardian. Everything he has remembered, everything he has seen confirms this for him. As he seeks his family cattle, he realises the implications of this act of recuperation, the way it runs defiantly against centuries of oppression and loss. Intent on the hunting, he sees again all things in his mind, as he had at dawn; this time he sees more. No longer will he hesitate to admit the cattle and all the land was stolen. He is dispelling the lie. "The anticipation of what he might find was strung tight in his belly; suddenly the tension snapped and hurled him into the empty room where the ticking of he clock had ceased.... The ride into the mountain had branched into all directions of time." (192)

Tayo slips at once into the awareness of his ancestors, before the "years and centuries were lost in that sound" of the ticking clock in the mysterious room of Night Swan's. (98) Time has been released from the prison of lies: "He knew then why the oldtimers could only speak of yesterday and tomorrow in terms of the present moment: the only certainty.... This night is a single night and there has never been any other." (192)

Tayo continues with his search, but even through his understanding, fear and witchery continue to haunt him. The dark

history of America, the pain of his people, strikes Tayo deeply just as he begins to outdistance it, paralysing him into weakness. Memories of white attitudes towards his traditional beliefs haunt him, reducing them to "superstition." (195) He collapses under a pine tree, his body "insubstantial" and invisible again. Yet, once again spirit and memory remind Tayo of who he is and what he must do. At this point of despair, certain events coalesce to aid him.

A mountain lion suddenly appears, drawing Tayo back to his task through the beauty and intensity of its bearing. The lion in this instance exercises curative power over Tayo through his complete union with the land.³⁶ As such, he is symbolic of the fluid nature of transition and story; one that shifts endlessly, like the seasons and its own graceful motion, memory and change animated in flesh.

Tayo is transfixed as he watches the lion walk in the awesome landscape, representing and singing its power with every muscle:

He did not walk or leap or run; his motions were like the shimmering of tall grass in the wind....The eyes caught twin reflections of the moon; the glittering yellow light penetrated his chest and he inhaled suddenly. Relentless motion was the lion's greatest beauty, moving like mountain clouds with the wind, changing substance and colour and rhythm with the contours of the mountain peaks: dark as lava rock and suddenly as bright as a field of snow. When the mountain lion stopped in front of him, it was not hesitation, but a chance for the moonlight to catch up with him. (196)

"Relentless motion" will continue, even if it is resisted. The mountain lion reminds Tayo of the necessity for change if the story,

³⁶ Traditionally a creature of great power, the mountain lion is associated with the six sacred directions, hunting and curing within each corner of the earth, and the two realms above and below it: "Mountain lion, the hunter. Mountain lion, the hunter's helper," (196) Hamilton Tyler notes traditional aspects of the mountain lion or cougar: "The Keresan game goddess Kochinako, or Yellow Woman, has as a consort Arrow Youth, the friend of Great Star, who is sometimes her brother and sometimes her husband." (p. 213) The consort hunter in *Ceremony* attends to Ts'eh and appears to be able to visit Tayo in animal form, as "mountain lion the hunter." (196) See Tyler, *Pueblo Animals and Myths* p. 211-36 for more detailed reports on various tales, which inform *Ceremony* at this point. Paula Gunn Allen offers a grounded exploration of Laguna belief.

and thus memory and life, are to continue. The fluid motion and interpenetrative stare of the lion stuns Tayo into the evolution of myth. He sees and understands what his ancestors did. Tayo kneels before the lion, and they gaze upon each other. When the lion vanishes, Tayo honours it by placing pollen in its footprints. Now, like the lion, his eyes hold no fear. He moves on.

At dawn he stopped on a grassy ridge to watch the sun rise; he let the mare graze, part of the cycle of restoration. Inside him the muddy water turmoil was settling to the bottom, and streaks of clarity were slowly emerging. Gathering the spotted cattle was only one color of sand falling from the fingertips; the design was still growing, but already long ago it had encircled him. (196)

Here Tayo affirms again the wider context he belongs in; Silko reminds the reader that roots are a belonging. The pattern that now emerges relates to this acknowledgment. The images of rootlessness that entangled his life after the war have been replaced with coherence. The sand painting is evolving. Shortly after sunrise, the cattle are sighted. The "unraveling" of the dark pressure within him "was lifting from the bones of his skull." Gradually Tayo's healing becomes evident, memory is restored. With clarity, he recalls events from the past which help him, rather than trap him.

When Tayo is chased by ranch-hands he falls. Lying on the ground, he feels the earth's energy around him. He is surrounded and penetrated, by mountain sage and earth. Embraced by the Mother, "sinking into the elemental arms of mountain silence", is part of the "returning" he wished for. Whether he remains static, held back by "molten pain" or decides to "let go and flow back" to this absolute centre is "up to him." (202) That he next sleeps amongst fallen leaves that chart the "deep layers of years," in a deer's bed shows how has chosen the earth, yielding resistance to the coming evening.³⁷ The

³⁷ It is almost as if Tayo places himself in this hollow left by the deer as a kind of offering, just as he sprinkled pollen in the tracks of the mountain lion.

love he has felt from the earth is returned in kind.

With this yielding Tayo acknowledges the dark history of colonisation, a barrier in the evolution of the story: if Tayo is to become one with the earth and the stories, he must see again the brutal damage each human has endured. This girds him in his role as caretaker.

Upon waking, Tayo sees the land purified by snow, "blurring the boundaries between earth and sky" and bringing the spirits closer. (207) All trace of human contact is erased. The mountain lion is safe from the ranch-hands. He is settled, coming home to the land: "He smiled. Inside his belly was smooth and soft, following the contours of the hills and holding the silence of the snow." (205) The snowflakes are "like the gauzy curtains" in Night Swan's house. This storm is Ts'eh's work, for when she folds up her "black storm-pattern blanket" on his return, the sky clears. (208) Like Night Swan, Ts'eh embodies feminine dichotomies of nature. Allen discusses these qualities: "Woman bears, that is true. She also destroys. That is true. She also wars and hexes and mends and breaks. She creates the power of the seeds, and she plants them."³⁸ Tayo, in harmony with the female principle, is one who aids spiritual transition, as Swan notes:

Women of power favour blue silk clothing and shawls. They are medicine women, and have either hazel-green (Night Swan and the Mexican captive) or ocher (Ts'eh and Spider Woman) in hue. Like Spider Woman, all are mountain women settled in or on Mount Taylor, the sacred cardinal peak foremost in rank to the Laguna, dictated by Spider Woman's ordering of the creative process. In addition, they harness the elemental powers of the universe: fire, water, wind, rain, snow, light and the stars. Through women, Tayo is connected to the land, and he earns his social identity as a yellow person, beloved by family and welcomed in the Kiva. "We came out of the land and we are hers." (255)³⁹

³⁸ Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 14.

³⁹ Swan, E. "Laguna Symbolic Geography," p. 246.

Close with the earth, Tayo returns home to Laguna, and dreams of Ts'eh so clearly it is as if she never left him. "He was overwhelmed by the love he felt for her.... He stood and watched the rainy dawn and he knew he would find her again." (217-8)

He returns to the ranch, almost a year after he had been there full of nightmare, and it is fertile and watered.⁴⁰ He has entered a new cycle: "The terror of the dreaming he had done on this bed was gone, uprooted from his belly; and the woman had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams." (219) Here, in this place, Tayo experiences how far he has come. The following passage is worth quoting in full as a testament to that healing:⁴¹

The buzzing of grasshopper wings came from the weeds in the yard, and the sound made his backbone loose. He lay back in the red dust on the old mattress and closed his eyes. The dreams had been terror at loss, at something lost forever but nothing was lost; all was retained between the sky and the earth, and within himself. He had lost nothing. The snow-covered mountain remained, without regard to titles of ownership or the white ranchers who thought they possessed it. They logged the trees, they killed the deer, bear and mountain lions, they built their fences high; but the mountain was far greater than any or all of these things. The mountain outdistanced their destruction just as love had outdistanced death. The mountains could not be lost to them, because it was in their bones; Josiah and Rocky were not far away. They were close; they had always been close. And he loved them then as he had always loved them, the feeling pulsing over him as strong as it had ever been. They loved him that way; he could still feel the love they had for him. The damage that had been done had never reached this feeling. This feeling was their life, vitality locked deep within blood memory, and the people were strong, and the fifth world endured, and nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained. (219-20)

The lie has been challenged, and the reality of the land cuts through the anger spurred by witchery. Tayo completes a returning into his own way of seeing, free of messages of guilt and shame. At

⁴⁰ Just before he left, Grandma gives him a message full of a rich prophecy and flexibility: "'Old man Ku'oosh came around the other day. He said maybe pretty soon you would have something to tell them. He said maybe you would go talk to them sometime.'" (218) Some important events must occur before Tayo can tell his story.

⁴¹ Kenneth Lincoln cites Paula Gunn Allen (UCLA, May 1982): "Among the Keres Pueblo 'good' and 'beautiful' are the same word." *Renaissance*, p.44. The deed of beauty is also one of integrity.

this moment, Tayo shifts from the clenching “terror” of loss and change that persuaded him to cling to linear time, fear and anger and opens to the flourishing eternity of “blood memory.” When Tayo does open to the fundamental basis of coherent, constructive memory he sees love and faith as its power. It is grounded in the generations and the land that surrounds him. These two forces outdistance loss and indeed, transcend it. Memory maintains the lessons and unities of the past, restoring the larger web of story to Tayo’s existence. His feelings are positive and loving, and extend beyond the doubt witchery preys upon. After his quest and period of healing isolation, Tayo breaks free of the restrictions of society and ‘simply’ sees things as they are. Tayo’s opening here prevents the kind of desperate need and fear that lead to acts of destruction. Memory provides a context for his own conduct in the present. Tayo knows this conduct will continue: he has reached the bedrock of his homeplace, his memory and his self.

Tayo is free of the shame and rage, and has come to see the mountain as she stands; she is clear: “The snow-covered mountain remained, without regard to titles of ownership.” He has reclaimed memory through love and the “blood memory” that nourishes the people, a memory he was born into. This recovery, a journey of recuperation, has occurred as he realised anew — as his ancestors before him — the power and lifespan of the sacred mountain Tse-pi’na. This pristine “vitality” endures in present stories, belief and relationships. “He comes to believe in the story of his own life.”⁴² He therefore comes to accept and care for his own memory and the larger “becoming” (as Betonie named it.) Such change is a guide and goal,

⁴² Lincoln, *Renaissance*, p. 245.

proof of the natural way he can now accept change and memory.

Thus *Ceremony's* people are joined by love, embraced by the earth and remembered for their reverent presence upon it. This cycle of remembrance becomes the foundation of the present, stretching back into the past to enrich the future. In returning to his homeland, Tayo returns to his memory, and memory and love lead him to wholeness.

For the reader, this is also a moment of unity as the real causes for the disease Tayo has experienced come out, and reveal the love that still remains. Tayo consciously returns to the state of profound awareness that permeates *Ceremony's* opening poems. He returns to his own tribal and personal roots.

Amidst the flowering land around the ranch, so different from the dusty wind-blown scenes of the previous Spring, Tayo finds increasing harmony and peace. The cattle are growing. Watching them, Tayo "could see Josiah's vision emerging, he could see the story taking form in bone and muscle." (226) The transition from vision to reality reveals the ceremony at work. "As far as he could see, in all directions, the world was alive. He could feel the motion pushing out of the earth into the sunshine — the yellow spotted snake the first to emerge, carrying the message on his back to the people." (221) With this awareness, Tayo continues a personal emergence that harks back to the cave Ku'oosh described: "The snakes went there to restore life to themselves." (35) As a messenger to his people, Tayo continues to live the story he will tell. Part of that telling depends upon the return of Ts'eh, since she knows it must be completed.

Ts'eh does indeed return: "She turned to him as soon as he saw her, as if she had been waiting." (221) Tayo's time with her now is spent learning of her wisdom and power, as well as his place within

love:

She was with him again, a heartbeat unbroken where time subsided into dawn, and the sunset gave way to the stars, wheeling across the night. The breaking and crushing were gone, and the love pushed inside his chest, and when he cried now it was because she loved him so much. (227)

Ts'eh's love continues to transform Tayo's understanding, healing him close to the earth and the unhindered cycles of "time immemorial." She tells him, as Betonie, Ku'oosh and Night Swan have, of the insidious power witchery has, its capacity to create a kind of living death that is worse than death itself because it grows like a cancer, spread by "[t]he destroyers: they work to see how much can be lost, how much can be forgotten. They destroy the feeling people have for each other." (229) Tayo realises when she tells him of the numbness they try to create, that he has been captive to witchery: "He never knew how long he had been lost there, in that hospital in Los Angeles." (229) Recalling that dislocation at this point of connection with everything around him, Tayo sees how much has been recovered through memory. The pattern emerges. Ts'eh describes the faded rock painting of the she-elk, and in doing so, explains the force that keeps witchery at bay: "Nobody has come to paint it since the war. But as long as you remember what you have seen, then nothing is gone. As long as you remember, it is part of the story we have together." (231) However, the destroyers would have that story end. So when the couple part, Ts'eh says "'Remember... remember everything.'" (235)

Tayo must set out to battle the witchery, personified in the hateful veteran Emo. At dawn near Enchanted Mesa, Tayo reaches a point of complete balance, mirroring all that surrounds him from every sacred direction. It is a fitting aid in his task:

...at that moment in the sunrise, it was all so beautiful, everything, from all directions, evenly, perfectly, balancing day with night, summer months

with winter. The valley was enclosing this totality, like the mind holding all thoughts together in a single moment.

The strength came from here, from this feeling. It had always been there. (237)

Because nuclear weaponry, the most powerful manifestation of witchery, challenges the most solid mountain and story, the ceremony is not complete.⁴³ The reader is drawn towards resolution, to the moment of completion, not knowing whether witchery or love will prevail until that point. This is the "fragile" world in which balances must be struck.

Tayo recognises the "final pattern" spangle in his mind, after he realises his friends Harley and Leroy have betrayed him. What follows is a string of memories and stories centred around the atomic bomb tests. He recalls Grandma's story of the blast-flash in the night sky: "'I thought I was seeing the sun rise again.... I have never understood that thing I saw.'" (245) Now Tayo sees the reason in the atomic-test flash. With that piercing light ripping through the land and retinas of the people, the witchery spreads, rending land and spirit. Evil crosses from Gallup to Hiroshima in a blast that makes "one clan," one tribe in fear:

He had been so close to it, caught up in it for so long that its simplicity struck him deep inside his chest: Trinity Site, where they exploded the first atom bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at White Sands. And the top-secret laboratories where the bomb had been created were deep in the Jemez Mountains, on the land the Government took from Cochiti Pueblo: Los Alamos, only a hundred miles northeast of him now, still surrounded by high electricity fences and the ponderosa pine and tawny sandrock of the Jemez mountain canyon where the shrine of the twin mountain lion had always been. There was no end to it; it knew no boundaries; and he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid. From the jungles of

⁴³ Silko's interest in the epic struggle between the earth and voracious technology is focused in her story "Storyteller" in which the Alaskan region is subjected to drilling, machinery is swallowed by frozen ocean, or seizes in Arctic winter. Yet the onslaught continues as the lust for oil destroys the land and people of the land. Nevertheless the story ends on a note of inexorable portent as human forces subsume under another kind of "end" that transcends the destructive pattern of witchery. See *Storyteller*, p. 17-33.

his dreaming he recognised why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices, with Josiah's voice and Rocky's voice; the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand painting. From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for them all, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known these mesas, who had never seen the delicate colors of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter. (245-6)

Waiting beneath the earth, Death hovers. In that stilled, global fear, an emptiness abounds and the witchery spreads. Tayo stands in the place where all things are decided, and feels the mortal cries and dreams that arc about the planet. He has seen the pattern that is the creative web of memory and now sees the shadow of that web, a devouring inversion that revels in destruction — memory's antithesis. Without the earth and without the reverent stories told (and retold) upon it, the people "won't make it." In their waiting, they become afraid, clutching what they have against their mouths and hearts, forgetting the stories. And even now the silos continue their own cold watching, waiting for the day when the weapons they embrace will melt them in their own deadly becoming. The hum of electricity pierces the earth as Tayo sees his memory as one of billions in the ever-becoming story. Only the story, the love, can end the fear. At this "point of convergence" Tayo continues. He continues with his story, for now he knows it belongs to everything. Once seen, it cannot be hoarded; once remembered, it must resonate:

He cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together — the old stories, the war stories, their stories — to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and times. (246)

Tayo remembers and enters the transitions that ensure survival. On this "last night" in this "last place" Tayo's actions will be the physical counterpoint to "the old priests... praying for the force to continue the relentless motion of the stars." It is the power and

placement of the stars that mirrors the land he is within and the allied story he creates, follows and retells.

The witchery would be at work all night so that the people would see only the losses—the land and lives lost—since the whites came; the witchery would work so that the people would be fooled into blaming only the whites and not the witchery. It would work to make the people forget the stories of the creation and continuation of the five worlds; the old priests will be afraid too, and cling to rituals without making new ceremonies... (249)

Even elders will freeze at the prospect of destruction: witchery traps all in its blinding light, like a rabbit snared in headlights. But the balances, Silko affirms, must be struck. Adaptation must occur. The author reiterates the importance of memory in sustaining traditions and stories, giving people the clarity to address motives and forces behind bad events, rather than resorting only to blame and becoming passive victims. As Tayo watches Emo, Pinkie, and Leroy torture Harley, cutting skin off him in an echo of the evil witches' conference that spawned the dark story, Tayo resists the temptation to meet violence with violence. Instead, Tayo places his faith in the continuing power of the stars and the vast pattern—the story—they create. Such a pattern is forgotten and ignored only when witchery spawns violence:

...he could still see the stars. He had arrived at a convergence of patterns; he could see them clearly now. The stars had always been with them, existing beyond memory, and they were all held together there. Under these same stars the people had come down from White House in the north. They had seen mountains shift and rivers change course and even disappear back into the earth; but always there were these stars. Accordingly, the story goes on with these stars of the old war shield; they go on, lasting until the fifth world ends, then maybe beyond. The only thing is: it has never been easy. (254)

By *remembering* the ceremony and his story, and not yielding to violence, Tayo helps to turn the witchery "upon itself." (247) His understanding of the eternity of the stars leads him to an awareness of his ancestors. The stars exist "beyond memory" and this helps keep memory strong: the stars can ever be relied upon, for visions and

knowledge and understanding of motion, timing and convergence because they have always been. In *Ceremony*, love and celestial power connect to living, creative memory. Mythic scope informs human endeavour, and the reader journeys into a vision of wholeness through the expanding web of Tayo's own memory. Starlight bestows its ancient blessing upon any who maintain the story that began with the stars, the land and the people. Here Tayo sees the links between his loved ones, the earth and the stars which together have resisted the witchery of annihilation. "[I]t has never been easy" but no matter what happens on this earth, the stars will continue to watch.

With continuance assured, Tayo plans to gather the seeds of the plant which holds, as Ts'eh told him, "'the light of the stars, and the moon penetrating the light.'" (227) When he plants this, it will reflect the story in all its power, as surely as the leaves praise the night sky: "The plants would grow there like the story, strong and translucent as the stars." (254) Tayo has kept the story strong; he has also learned for himself that "'the changing, the becoming must be cared for closely.'" The tending which Betonie has carried out thus continues in the love and attention of Tayo.

Tayo's love for the story, for Ts'eh, Grandma, Rocky and Josiah, his love for the earth herself has found its own becoming through the transitions of the ceremony. In his waking dream, he achieves the safe return and re-membering he has longed for consciously and unconsciously. Tayo crosses the river at sunrise, like the Ka't'sina spirits he enters the embrace of the earth, secure in the power of story and his people:

The ear for the story and the eye for the pattern was theirs; the feeling was theirs; we came out of this land and we are hers.... They had always been loved. He thought of her then; she had always loved him, she had

never left him; she had always been there. He crossed the river at sunrise.
(255)

Tayo's purification is completed through his telling of his story to his tribal elders. In the Kiva his own story enters tribal consciousness, realised now as an affirmation of their continuing constructive remembrance. In their informed and attentive regard the elders are one more audience that ensure *Ceremony's* own internal coherence and continuation, because in his act of re-telling Tayo ensures the story, and life for his people, will continue. In responding to his story, the elders affirm this, and welcome him back to belonging:

They started crying
the old men started crying
'A'moo'ooh! A'moo'ooh!'
You have seen her
We will be blessed
again.

With the story re-membered and remembered, the witchery is "dead for now." (261) "Offering" her story to each new dawn, Silko joins the many voices of her ancestors who have shared their story, joining those around the world whose voices carry through time. *Ceremony* helps us to remember, by its beauty and its goodness, that we are blessed and can learn to attend and continue appropriately. For many, the memories will bring pain, and shame; as Silko says, "it never has been easy." But through those memories, new stories are born.

CHAPTER THREE

The Net of Story and Memory: Reading Keri Hulme's *the bone people*

Keri Hulme's novel *the bone people* charts the unfolding narrative of individual history, simultaneously adumbrating the emerging process of nascent national identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Peter Beatson, in *The Healing Tongue*, discusses the separate experiences of the historical versus the individual from the perspective of the dispossessed, recuperating and healing themselves:

When eventually viewed from a distance, as we now view the Norman Conquest of Britain, the British conquest of Aotearoa will appear as one distinct, prolonged moment. Viewed from up close by those who are still sliding down the back of the cusp, it can be seen as a series of linked shocks.¹

The experience of historical trauma, as noted in the introduction, and analysed in this study's first chapter, prevails and, in effect, shapes Keri Hulme's *the bone people*, the subject of this chapter. Indeed, Beatson's comments that: "Our recent history breaks up into a series of micro-ruptures.... Each of these local traumas is a microcosm of and contributes towards the sustained greater trauma" are as relevant and

¹ Beatson, *The Healing Tongue*, p. 3.

applicable to Tayo, as they are to Hulme's Kerewin, Joe and Simon. These characters are all recovering from equally braided histories of 'conquered' peoples and places. It can be argued that the colonial paradigm, replete with "local traumas" is, in fact, experienced trans-culturally. In other words, the sense of dislocation and cultural confusion observed in Silko's *Ceremony* is replicated, in many respects, in Keri Hulme's *the bone people*.

Chris Prentice suggests that the origins of the kind of micro-rupture and trauma which Beatson describes are to be found deep in the memory and ancestry of *the bone people's* characters.² Rather than entirely being a "Maori" novel, Prentice says *the bone people* "seems one that addresses the devastating effects of the colonial past on the present and the future."³ What emerges is the necessity for reflective exploration of the issue of trauma and the process by which it can be healed. Related questions are: what can we do to address the effects of the past on the present? If unexamined, what are the consequences of this neglect upon the future? What are the consequences of re-reading, and re-membering and how does this influence the kind of national potential Hulme describes in her novel?

One possible response to these questions lies in the nature of the act of reading itself, as experienced in both novels, as a means of contribution to the processes of healing, understanding and change. As Elaine Jahner convincingly demonstrates, *Ceremony* asks of its

² Prentice, C. "Re-Writing Their Stories, Re-Naming Themselves: Post-Colonialism and Feminism in the Fictions of Keri Hulme and Audrey Thomas" *SPAN* 23; Sept. 1986 pp. 68-80.

³ Prentice, p. 69.

readers a specific “act of attention.”⁴ This attention is equally requested by Hulme and it is, in fact, crucial and central to the conditions for constructive learning. Such a readerly participation (open-ended and unresolved) in a novel, inhibits didacticism and encourages not only a dialectic, but an on-going interrogatory process within and between readers. To follow up Jahner’s understanding of attention, it is possible to suggest that a corollary to the act of attention is the quality of remembrance that emerges from such attentiveness. In this context, it is clear that Hulme’s narrative strategies in *the bone people* both shape and encourage the proper functioning of memory. In entering the refracted memories of Simon and Joe Gillayley and Kerewin Holmes, we see how constructive responses to the past can begin to nurture a process of creating present coherence and healing. The benefits of this sort of historical reflective inquiry (on individual and national levels) become apparent. The evolutionary process of remembering (another narrative strategy) is itself encouraged by integrating memory into the present so that each character comes to accept the story of his or her life, just as Tayo does. If a trans-historical perspective is adopted, as Silko suggests, the healing potential of memory and belonging can be tapped into with great benefit to all those concerned.

“The Silence is Music”: Attending to the Silences

Silence as a chord of memory

In the first chapter, I outlined the way memory, land and story

⁴ Jahner, *op. cit.* p. 45.

traditionally preserve a sense of connection with the past. This link provides a base for the continuing evolution of story. It potentially assists in an exposition of self and culture for the author, thereby turning around a "terrible silence" as Joy Harjo explained. This process is exemplified by Tayo, in *Ceremony*, and affirmed by Silko in her letters and interviews. Keri Hulme has also journeyed into her cultural past, finding there her *turangawaewae*, her place to stand. In *the bone people* her characters are guided by their cultural and personal memories to a new understanding of the present.

Kerewin and Joe are nourished by an ancestral memory in their quests; their eventual re-membering of their Maoritanga gives them strength and wholeness. On the other hand, Joe's mute foster son Simon uses his individually-sourced memory as his means of turning around a "terrible silence" that grips his delicate inner world when he recalls a past we cannot explain. Doubt keeps the reader snared. Simon's constructive response to trauma always attends to the interconnection between memory, story and potential. Simon constantly shapes and ensures links between home, hope and memory as he confronts his past. Memories and experiences of trauma threaten his story — his potential — in the present. As he struggles to complete his story, past and present violence prevent him from making apparent all the connections he has envisioned. Simon's efforts to realise his vision become compelling. He is weaving a fragile story before our eyes, the past hidden in his elusive memory, glimpsed and sought by turns in the reader's mind.

Simon has a memory so powerful and dark it looms as the shadow to every smile and hope. Memory gives his present a depth and latent terror. He is mindful of the silent possibilities for joy and fear in each moment. Simon's quest is sparked off by the fact that he

inhabits and attends to the silent gaps between events and their potential. In her interview with Shona Smith, Hulme explained the space the mute Simon occupies in her "net" of words she, Kerewin and Joe weave: "You've certainly got all the words there, but sometimes it's the spaces between that are conveying the full impact of emotions and things like that."⁵ The space she describes can also be identified as the space of memory. It is memory which supplies the sense of what is not said. Initially many of the important memories are simply hinted at. The reader, in other words, must fill in the "gaps" in Hulme's net of words.

Simon, in his constant attention to the past as a determinant, is one of the most visionary characters in the novel. The reader must also become visionary by summoning memory to solve the mysteries of the past.⁶ It is a quality Hulme seems keen to impart through her narrative style. Carmel Gaffney points out that "by making us read attentively Hulme [like Silko] suggests that patterns do exist in life if we have the wit to discern them."⁷

Ceremony and *the bone people* require readers form links and make connections with past events, using memory to see the shape of

⁵ Smith, S. "Constructing the author: an interview with Keri Hulme" *Untold Magazine* 4. (Christchurch: Untold Books, Spring 1985. pp. 26-34) p. 28. Hulme made this important point clear in her interview with me: "I think sometimes things have more — impact the more you let people become part of it, but if you lay out everything neat and proper as, by and large, television tends to do, people become passive, and also become exclusive, whereas if you make lots of gaps as in a net [you create a space] for them to fall into or be taken over by, in a sense."

⁶ Later in the novel, Simon recalls a point when he examined the runes on Kerewin's knife Seafire: "It is mysterious but he must remember it all. He is in the mystery and he needs to remember." (304) His very act of recollection at this point is evidence of Simon's inner dialogue between remembrance and re-vision. *the bone people* also demands such a mindful and considered response from the reader.

⁷ Gaffney, C. "Making the Net Whole: Design in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*" *Southerly* 3 September, 1986. pp. 293-302. p. 300.

the net (or web, as Silko might term it) of story, thus realising a sense of continuity. The reader must pay attention to the character's memory of past events. In *the bone people* reader and character join forces in a process of re-collection. The reader and Kerewin "Sherlock" Holmes have similar questions: who are the characters that have entered here life, where do Simon and Joe come from, and where will the three of them go? ⁸ Each participant must look for the connections between the strands of word and event, connections that make up the net of story. Memory is one of "the gaps in the net" that "need explication."⁹ Hulme invites us to begin this task when we open her novel. The past, and character response to it, provide definition and doubt in the development of the story. The reader attends to the hidden memories, the spaces, in the net of the story because Hulme does not answer our questions about the origins of the characters, origins which impact upon the present narrative. In doing so, we become snared like the whitebait I mentioned in Chapter One which Hulme scoops with her billowing net.¹⁰ Attending to silences attunes the reader to the unfurling of story, and the gaps that help define the net's function as a snare of memory, potential and creativity.

In *the bone people*, as in *Ceremony* memory becomes an active principle, responding to events. Each character has their own way of

⁸ Hulme, K. A. *the bone people* (Auckland: Spiral & Hodder and Stoughton, 1985. London: Picador, 1986. 450p.) p. 95. Page numbers, cited from now on, refer to these editions.

⁹ Hulme made this statement about gaps in a phone conversation to me in June 1993.

¹⁰ Hulme told me: "I don't know whether you're interested at all in the technique of brewing books, but it does intrigue me, and half the fun of doing a novel is you have room to play with words and methods of snaring a reader, entertaining a reader, enthralling a reader."

coping with their private histories shaped by the pain and hope of the past. Bound together in personal histories and mediated by memory, the three qualities of pain, hope and remembrance are inextricable. The degree to which characters let their own stories change is determined by their response to the events that have made them. Openness in the face of memory reflects openness in response to the present and nascent future.

While *the bone people* ultimately makes clear that the characters are "nothing more than people, by themselves," this chapter will partially focus upon the mute and psychic child Simon, supported by the interview I carried out with Keri Hulme in August 1993. But precisely because the three characters are "nothing more than people, by themselves," it becomes increasingly necessary to consider them all. (4) Kerewin Holmes, the novel's protagonist, describes Simon as "the catalytic urchin who touched this lot [Kerewin, Joe and Simon] off" and, as such, he initiates the process of re-membering that constitutes the novel and the characters' recuperation and healing. (427) Simon's recognition of this potential, glimpsed at the start of the novel, sets him on a quest separate from (but intertwined with) Joe and Kerewin.

Simon begins his journey with his homeplace as the only destination. The adults, on the other hand, must complete their spiritual quests in order to reach this understanding. Simon knows where he belongs.

Joe and Kerewin, and others in the story, have difficulty appreciating and understanding Simon's vision because they evade their own past. Evasion and fear of the past are, as Kerewin notes, more likely to create a frozen present: "Stasis. A hell in itself. No change." (261) The world becomes full of what Betonie called "dead

things" when memory is leached away. With memory silenced, responsibility is also damaged.¹¹ The consequence is "stasis" and a loss of purpose.

Trying to determine precisely what past events have shaped the present in *the bone people* is one of the most intriguing tasks for the reader and characters alike. The reader and character collaborate, potentially, in processes of healing, and understanding and change. The novel opens with a Prologue entitled "The End At The Beginning." Encountering this title, the reader glimpses an elusive and intensely mysterious state of harmony that haunts the novel as surely as the prospect of violence or nightmare.

Hulme told me "balance is all," and the potential for growth and dissolution is a key factor in snaring the reader with the "net" of story, thereby making us become "part of it", just as characters like Joe and Tayo live through their stories, stories which have a wide influence. In *the bone people*, readers mediate between the destructive trauma of the past and a "perilous" hope for the future, with character response to memory influencing our own response. We are not certain whether destruction or growth will prevail, until the end of the novel. For even as we re-turn to the shining conclusion on the novel's first page, the "chance-begotten" story remains open. This world remains uncertain. As Kerewin writes in her penultimate journal entry, "'o there's worlds to go into yet, hells to explore....'"¹²

¹¹ Hulme has stated that she regards Kerewin "as a very active person who's reneged on her responsibilities." Smith, p. 26.

¹² It is worth noting here that Hulme has written a novella, *The Reef in Winter*, which re-visits the trio. Hulme says: "I looked at the three of them about three years down the road, just to see what things were happening, what was going on. Um, I don't think I'll publish that for a wee while. It was... intriguing." Hulme to Dawson, Okarito.

(436) Throughout the novel this tension between "creation and change, destruction and change" keeps the reader snared. (3)

The Prologue, with its memories of despair and scenes of potential, infuses the reader with a kind of latent hope. This is sporadically stirred by each characters' fragile response to memory and the present. The content of the Prologue situates the reader, and the figures we will eventually identify as Simon, Joe, and Kerewin, in a fluid continuum of past, present and future. Paralleling this haunting but elusive harmony is a pervasive, foreboding presence. It is the shadow of the unexamined past, threatening to devour the present. In fact, the first five pages of *the bone people* lay out these polarities and possibilities in an elusive outline.

The first page presents the three characters as they may become, at the 'conclusion' of the story. The following page offers an explanation for their joy — "Together, all together, they are the instruments of change." (4) What follows these positive images is the antithesis of the previous images: three separate sketches of the deep pain that informs each character's possible response to the present, because these scenes of memory are the darkest; moreover, they also shape their responses to the future. This remembered pain is left unexplained, to embody the subsequent chapters of the book.

Linking with the end of the novel, the first page groups sentences into three bundles, each describing Simon, Joe, and Kerewin respectively. Upon completing *the bone people*, the reader can return to the first page and, by drawing on the narrative memory imparted as the novel, can inform this future scene in the light of their own remembrance. Simon's opening depiction is ethereal and bright:

He walks down the street. The asphalt reels by him.
It is all silence.
The silence is music.

He is the singer.
 The people passing smile and shake their heads.
 He holds out a hand to them.
 They open their hands like flowers, shyly.
 He smiles with them.
 The light is blinding; he loves the light.
 They are the light. (3)

This first passage is full of mystery. As readers, we lack the necessary narrative memory to identify Simon at this point. He is described buoyantly. Images of "light" infuse the "silence" that is the "music" he sings. Already we are seeing the potent fusion of Simon's ability to articulate the silences between words and music, an apparent contradiction which drives Simon's vision of the future. His vision is fed by a dark fear that threatens his sense of self and deepens his need for "the light." Once we turn the page and read a linking piece that details the "perilous and new" potential the three characters hold "all together," we enter the darkness that inhabits each character's memory.

Simon: The Horror of Memory

Memory functions in two ways within Simon. On the one hand he creates a web of music and language that is composed of his more recent memory, a creative act of remembrance that shapes his vision of "perilous" union with Joe and Kerewin. On the other hand, Simon contends with the "horror" of his earliest memories of torture and abuse as a tiny child. This hope and creativity contends with his deeper fears, the memory of horrific events over which he had no control.

The narrative states that "In the Beginning, it was darkness, and

more fear, and a howling wind across the sea." (5) Thus, through narrative, we enter the recesses of Simon's mind. As Simon remembers, we perceive it as a place of terror, characterised by helplessness, torture and the pervasive presence of language: "In the memory in the black at the back of his eyes, there are words, different words. Help, but not help. There were words." (5) And so Simon's own genesis of pain closes, pointing again to the Biblical phrase echoed at the start of the passage: "In the Beginning.... There were words." Language is a medium that surrounds Simon at this point, but it provides no relief. He cannot call out, and the "endearments" he hears bear no relation to the hurt he is experiencing. This chronological beginning counters his hope.

Simon's trauma at this early age is still infused with a sense of pattern and foresight:

It is happening again, and like the time before, there is nothing he can do to stop it. It will take away the new people, it will break him, it will start all over again. He cannot change it. And worst of all, he knows in an inchoate way that the greatest terror is yet to come.

Thus the narrative demonstrates that this pattern of dissolution, breakdown and repetition is lived out by Simon in *the bone people*.

From the earliest memories, through to a formation of bonds with Joe and Kerewin, (which include the endurance of violence at the hands of Joe) and the dissolution of that home when the three characters separate on journeys of recovery, Simon is accurate in his intuition of events. The key factor that drives him in the novel is that, after so much pain and fragmentation, Simon is determined to heal, and develop a stable homeplace nourished by constructive memory and love. His creative life has been devoted to achieving this state of harmony, a state he maintains through interaction between language, memory and a wary attentiveness of the "horror" within him.

Simon's psychic ability to see auras gives him a real insight into the inner life of others.¹³ Simon recalls the tendency for Kerewin to babble over her grief and passion, noting it as threatening to her wellbeing as she becomes a "husk." The prospect of this is seriously concerning to Simon. This is a reflection of his vision of wholeness and unity, as well as his desperate need for love. His second sight is intimately bound up with his view of potential, because that future will only come about if all the characters are whole and together. Already, after being caught by Kerewin in her Tower for the first time, Simon is responding to their inner life and memories with astute compassion, shaman before his time:

...Kerewin Holmes covered with flames like knives. And a fierce hidden flame inside it that sometimes dimmed taking all the over-lights with it, sometimes sank so far down that he was afraid it would never emerge again, and he would be left to face a husk that babbled. It is a beginning again, afraid and excited at the same time.

A beginning, and I never thought there would be another beginning. Just the end.

The end is still there, he told himself that while it talked at him.(72-3)

This passage fuses Simon's twin concerns with "beginning" and "end" that we saw polarised in the Prologue. Mediating between these two extremes of elation and terror, Simon's experience and his capacity for endurance is astounding. Hulme says her "covert agenda" in *the bone people* involves "bringing two quite different ways of thinking and two very different histories together."¹⁴ Simon's role in bridging the gap between fatalism and hope is very important. Significantly, his psychic power includes the facility to see the future and to see the times when characters will "squash down" on their

¹³ This is consistent with Hulme's interest in using Simon as a means of exploring human potential: "I've been intrigued by the way people who are handicapped in one sense tend to hyper-develop others." Hulme to Dawson, Okarito.

¹⁴ Alley, E. and M. Williams (ed.) *In the Same Room: Conversations with New Zealand Writers*. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1992. 322 p.) p. 151.

past, becoming a "husk." In doing so, characters restrict the possibilities of "another beginning." One consequence of this restriction is a disruption in the process of braiding between past and present, a weaving necessary for resolution within individual memory and the wider context of historical and cultural memory. Because the past is always present in Simon's mind, it is quite literally before him. He is mindful of the "end" that lurks in every situation. The fear of dissolution binds him to a ferocious hope, and illuminates his present with significance and opportunity.

When he first meets Kerewin, Simon continues "drinking" up Kerewin's answers (and alcohol) with great enthusiasm, the latter because of her fine grog cabinet, and the former because of Simon's special relationship between language and memory. "The words, the words that chattered and bubbled round his ears... words that had been spoken across his head before, but never to him." (73) Lying on Kerewin's studio floor, Simon reflects on his relationship with language. Language, and the creation of words and music is a means of survival:

The horror was still at home in him.
It was almost always there.
The only defence he could raise against the dark and the horror and the laughing terrible voices were his golden singers, the sounds and patterns of words from the past that had been fitted to his own web of music. They often broke apart, but he could always make them new. So he lay on the floor and listened to them, and made Kerewin part of them, part of his heart. (73-4)

Simon uses language and music like a web, lovingly crafting and fortifying inner patterns and nets to prevent the horror from bursting through. It is an image of fragility and intricate creative attentiveness which also occurs in the speech of Laguna medicine man Ku'oosh in *Ceremony*. Moreover, like that evolving process, Simon has developed his "defence" to maintain a sense of self in the face of

invading destructiveness. The "web of music" is of his own making and it serves as a lexicon of self in the darkness, countering "the horror" which grasps him in nightmare. Through language use, Simon creates a net of words. Despite his outward silence, his personal interaction with language is vital.

For Simon, inner speech determines and maintains a sense of self. It also becomes the basis for his self-created, constructive memory, a memory of recent positive experience. Inner utterance and repetition of a word leads inwards to "his heart" and helps integrate the present into his inner life. Simon balances between possession by nightmare and envisioned homeplace, carefully attending to words, weaving them to achieve a balance in the present. In this respect Simon not only attends to the creative shaping of language as Ku'oosh does in *Ceremony*, but also, like Betonie, he nourishes a vision.

Simon's relationship with memory is a source of pain — his dark memories are devastating. But his reaction to "the horror" is creative rather than destructive; he builds his own web or net of words to trap the "evil reedy voices" in his mind. (302) Containing dark memory demands vigilance. However, vision nurtures his hope. This is evident in the joy which fills him when the trio first meet: "The elation was still at home in him. It had come to a climax last night when her hand and Joe's had touched, with him aching and unsteady and overwhelmed with joy in the centre." (73) Simon is filled with such horror and hope that he swings between the past and future, trying to shape a home for himself in the present. He is desperate to maintain links with Joe and Kerewin as they provide some stability. Even the violence dealt out by Joe is not enough to drive Simon from the potential he has seen in the trio. Joe is viciously polarised in his

own extremes of sadism and tenderness, a combination that has made Simon a wary child. Upon his first visit, Kerewin shelters him at the Tower where he sleeps twisted into himself, and jerks awake, performing what Kerewin describes as a "'louverly block'" which covers his head and torso. (37)

Simon's reflections upon his own "horror" are comparable to Kerewin's painting process, where she depicts an encroaching mass: "one could never be sure that the red was not an evil devouring fog, creeping up to the netted shadow's last stronghold, last retreat." (72) Looking at the painting, Simon pales and "cups one finger in the other hand, tightens the hand as the finger tries to get away" mimicking exactly the devouring quality of his own horror. (73) This "spreading" mass not only foreshadows Kerewin's cancer later in the book but depicts the way a darkness can grip her, Joe or Simon and imprison them temporarily. The "prisoning chasms" of loss and dread paralyse Simon in nightmares, and they plunge Kerewin into a lonely miasma of despair. Joe responds to entrapment with a terrified frenzy of violence, trying to admonish and control Simon in the same manner as he wishes to control his feelings of grief.

Simon seems to have recovered from the "terrible ache" he felt earlier. The only hint we get of the origins of this pain, is when Joe says a beating "seems to be the only way" to tell Simon not to borrow chess pieces. (48) Whilst he is at the Tower, Joe hits Simon across the legs, hard; these things are noted by Kerewin and the reader. More than any other factor in the novel, the violence is sickening in its brutality, and in the level of denial that surrounds it. No other factor has been as hidden: Simon makes no mention of it, though he and Joe discuss his behaviour in the shower, and there are constantly disturbing hints. Violence is the silence in the present, fed from Joe's

diet of denied memory and grief. This denial simmers and whispers in chilled silence throughout the first meetings between the three protagonists, a testament to the way denied memory can become deceit. Both Joe and Kerewin fall victim to their fear. Their denial and irresponsibility has repercussions beyond themselves.

Deceit and fear characterise Joe's response to his treatment of Simon. "It's not wrong, he tells himself. Well, not bad wrong. What else is there to do?" (130) Joe's meagre attempts to admit the truth to Kerewin fall victim to his own longing for warmth. These needs are thwarted in turn because he cannot accept the awful loss of his wife and son which took that warmth away. Holding back from telling Kerewin of his beatings, he has a "feeling of roosting in a false calm." (130) Much of the neglect that Simon endures is linked with Joe's drinking. Alcohol in *the bone people* is sometimes celebrated by Kerewin, as a source of pleasure. But, more often it leads to misfortune and is depicted as distorting memory and responsibility. "On the Friday night of bad memory" Joe has forgotten to trace Simon's whereabouts after beating him that morning. (108) Turning up at the pub Kerewin challenges a drunken Joe about his neglect of Simon: "Anger is welling up in her. Joe doesn't give a damn about where the child has gone." (113) His relatives respond with hooded glances and uneasy silence. Kerewin and Joe spend a distant evening together. Kerewin returns to the Tower to find Simon, bloodied and bruised.

Kerewin's discovery of the beaten child is a grimly foreshadowed event. Violence hovers on the horizon until this moment; now it dawns, and it breaks into the consciousness of the reader with a dreadful inevitability: "His eyelids are swollen buddhalike, and purple. His lower lip is split and blood has dried blackly in thee

corners of his mouth. Bruises across the highboned cheeks, and already they're dark." (115) Joe's treatment of Simon is a living antithesis to the hope present in the novel. It gives the narrative an urgency and desperation, because these are events characters have some control over. Things may change for better or worse, but the reader simply does not know. Kerewin suspects Joe first of all, but Simon protects him in his shame. The violence that Joe deals out has become their darkest secret. Over the remainder of this chapter the truth emerges, a dark seam in their history together. Joe weaves a web of hidden violence that threatens Simon's inner words.

When Kerewin rings Joe to tell him of the battered child, his denial is "wavery", but becomes "positive" when he denies hitting Simon on the face. (117) Joe has so much to deny that his response is deepened by fear. When the father berates the child over Kerewin's radiophone, they appear like a grim sado-masochistic couple bent on destroying each other for the sake of propriety and secrecy. "The child holds the mike, staring into it through the blur of tears for quite a time after Joe has hung up." (118) How can love and harmony ever really admit the truth of violence? Deceit has found a way, as Simon stands silent near the phone. Can a real unity still be achieved? And will the trio's bond survive the end of pretence and the beginning of honesty? These doubts haunt Simon and Joe, keeping them, and the truth, silent. Needless to say, Hulme engineers her narrative to make these doubts uppermost in the reader's mind. We must read on in an effort to assuage them.

In the beatings Joe faces all his own weakness and grief as he pummels the child's frail body. What of Simon? He simply endures because he thinks pain is his due, hoping for the end so the next hour will bring guilt and reconciliation, muting the increasing deceit.

Simon will live with the lies because he needs Joe and Kerewin, the two who constitutes the substance of his future and his home.

When Joe, hungover, collects his son who had slept at Kerewin's, he "strangely to Kerewin's eyes — held Simon's hands a long moment, and said something very softly and very quickly so she couldn't catch the words." (119) Once more the reader suspects something, and once more the details are hidden from our conscious memory, creating an urge for discovery. We do not want this deceit to continue, and so we yearn across the distance between present and future, reader and text. At this point the reader is truly "ensnared." We long for an outcome which is beyond our control, and that limitation propels us further into the story.

Fear of loss keeps deceit alive, because Joe (teetering in the "false calm") tries so hard to hold on to the glimpse of hope: "I don't want to ruin things" he begs his cousin Piri. "Ruin what? You've already done the ruining" says Piri. Joe's fear denies truth that may destroy that hope as he runs from his past. Challenged by Piri, Joe needs to be honest: "'You're spoiling something special and bright and you fucking know it.'" Piri continues: "'That was the last time. You do it again, and it's not just Kerewin we'll clue up. And it's not just Kerewin's company you'll lose.'" (132) Joe walks back to Kerewin: "Now's the time. But he freezes at the thought of telling. Not yet, he thinks, smiling desperately, I *can't* tell her yet..." Joe reneges again, turning away from vision, away from truth; he is actually making his hopes more illusory.

Joe's fear rests in the loss of an imagined home, Simon's in an actual one that already exists between the three, and Kerewin's in a loss of her Tower, a dissolution of her "stony" and imperious defences. (243, 443) Yet Simon's silence threatens the adults' sense of

intactness. His presence and his vision infiltrate their minds. His silence is without limit — it pervades — in a way no language can. It is boundless. So is his terror. The unrestrained emotion scares Joe: "I am afraid of his ardour. I am afraid of him," Joe realises later. (346) And so the son's body endures and reveals the truth of the man's fear.

For Simon, the dreams are always there, "the horror" always with him, and on his body the past has wrought its welts and scars, the memory of blows carried forever. This reality cannot be hidden, and it is the body's simple truth that Kerewin sees again, the memory battered upon the flesh, inexorably changing her story of Joe and Simon.

Before Kerewin makes her discovery however, and confirms her first intuition about the culprit, the reader views a scene in which Joe beats Simon into semi-consciousness because he went to Binn Daniels, an aged pederast. The scene reveals Joe's schism; it shows us the way memory, love and violence have become dangerously twisted in his consciousness. Drunk, Joe belts Simon in a frenzy; the description is significantly more brutal because it is cursory: "He hits the boy until he grovels on the floor, gone beyond begging for it to stop." (136) "Why should I feel guilty?" thinks Joe, "wrapping the end of the belt round his fist." "He's [Simon] the bad one." Simon is not to see Daniels again. But "through the beer fog" Joe sees his contradictions: "Like a voice in his head, You didn't tell him not to go there." And still his conscience is ignored. With Simon in front of him, barely conscious, Joe attempts the lamest of explanations,:

'Otherwise, otherwise,' he looks blearily into the child's darkened tearclouded eyes, 'you could get really badly hurt. And I don't want you hurt, tama.'

Sweet Christ, don't look at me like that.

As Joe beats Simon, he mentally asks his dead wife, "What else

can I do, Hana? What else is there to do?" Flaying Simon, a living symbol of his memory, "this secondhand, barely touched half-formed relic of her [Hana's] presence," Joe harks back to his grief in a way that is revolting. (6) His self-pity wells up in his "antiseptically clean" house which has had the past and colour erased from the surface, and Hana's trinkets smashed. (76) Simon has broken these memories of the past, throwing them at Joe in a symbolic attempt to wake him to the feelings, the life, he has forgotten. Joe, just as surely, breaks the only living reminder of his past, and his conscience: "don't look at me like that." Once again Simon holds Joe to his word, even after he has broken it with his fists.

In his house of buried truths and memories, without even a photo of the wife and son he has lost, Joe attacks the only person left in his life. The beatings are "for your own good" (136) he tells Simon, echoing psychologist Alice Miller:

For parents motives are the same today as they were [in the eighteenth century]: in beating their children they are struggling to regain the power they once lost to their own parents. For the first time, they see the vulnerability of their own earliest years, which they are unable to recall, reflected in their children. Only now, when someone weaker than they is involved, do they finally fight back, often quite fiercely.¹⁵

Miller cites the "inner child" as a source for violence. In Joe's case, this vulnerability is compounded by his resistance to memories of loss. It seems he beats Simon as a salve to feelings of despair, as well as inflicting some kind of degraded attempt to "mind" the child Hana shared with him. The only way he can keep this bargain is by holding on to (and hiding) his memory, an emotional clenching and denial that sends him over the edge, hitting on and on and on. Simon, in

¹⁵ Miller, A. *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence* (Toronto: Collins, 1986, p. 16) quoted in Maxwell, A. "Reading the bone people: Toward a Literary Postcolonial Nationalist Discourse" *Antic* No. 3 pp. 33-45, 1987, p. 38.

accepting the fists, sees pain as the necessary co-requisite of love. His memories of the past, both recent and early, do not deny this.

Two days later Joe recounts the three severe beatings he has dealt out over five days. Here we enter Joe's remorseful and evasive memory. The reconciliation scene that follows this ghastly list reveals the extent of the conspiracy between Simon and Joe, one founded in guilt, as the following extract reveals. In it, Joe's efforts at *self-protection* are dismissed by Sim's harrowing pain. No other scene reveals the extent of their fear and collusion so clearly:

'Tama, you've never told Kerewin, have you?' in the same quiet-as-breathing voice.

His son shakes his head.

'Why?'

There's a long silence.

Because she'll know I'm bad, the boy mouths, and starts crying. Because she'll know I'm bad, he says it again and again, gulping miserably through the silent words, She'll know I'm bad.

'O Christ,' says Joe, and cries with him. (139)

In *the bone people* characters are terrified of revealing inner truth; if they do so, they risk what they think will be absolute rejection. The relationship to memory must begin on a basis of honesty in the present, or else the real effects of the past, and of denial, are hidden. Simon's body, and Joe's sociopathic behaviour remain clothed.¹⁶ Simon, in his recollections of trauma knows how the past has affected him; it means he would rather endure Joe's anger than be forced to confront another "end."

In the light of the "beginning" that is forming with Kerewin, Joe runs from the past: its vividness and pain threatens to engulf his present, and he would rather ward it off with violence than have to face it. Every time Simon's behaviour disturbs Joe's notion of

¹⁶ Mita, Merata, "Indigenous Literature in a Colonial Society" *The Republican* (November 1984, p. 7) Mita refers to Joe as a sociopath, as does Hulme in introducing her readings of *the bone people* on National Radio. (Replay Radio, 1985)

stability, he tells Simon not to "spoil it." (56) From the beginning of *the bone people*, Simon, as "relic" of Joe's memory, has placed the past firmly at his side. And Joe has not fully admitted it. In denial, the child, and the man are answerable to nothing but their own fear that memory will destroy the future.

Events coalesce in the next scenes, revealing the truth of recent memory. As readers, we are privy to knowledge that is held in check by the narrative, until released through Kerewin's discovery of the "six year old debauchee" on her floor. (144) When she puts him in the shower, Simon is plunged into watery nightmare. He does not resist when Kerewin lifts his shirt to put him to bed: "It's because I am tired, he weeps helplessly. I can't stop, I can't say. I *can't*." (146) Her discovery of Simon's welts and open wounds tells her more about Simon's history than all her other knowledge. Her response is one of shocked silence, and then she asks him one question; her most pointed and desperate since the story began:

'Why didn't you say *anything*?' There was pain in her voice, 'Why did you keep quiet?' but he shook his head.
And that was all she said. (148)

With the following narrative shift from "Day into Nightmare," the reader finds Kerewin's consciousness linked with theirs. Now reader and character know the truth about Joe, a truth which alters our memory of the narrative; suddenly Kerewin (with the reader) can explain the silences and hurried whispers between father and son, and we have a different perspective on the potential of the novel. The present is more threatening than the pain of the past. Yet this pain still lingers.

Simon's shame kept him silent; he refuses to meet Kerewin's eyes whilst she peels the clothing off his running sores. "Somehow, Joe, e hoa, dear friend, you've managed to make *him* ashamed of

what *you've* done./ Neat job." (148) As she reflects on his predicament, and how she is going to manage this new knowledge, she recalls a scene in which Joe tells Simon to stay quiet; "Suddenly Joe swings round and down," bending to tell the child, gently, to stop grizzling. (150) The instant of Joe's movement carries the potential for tenderness or harm, and from now on Kerewin and the reader are poised in that moment, watching. When Simon comes downstairs after his sleep, with fresh bandages still on, Kerewin notes he is distant, with the false, proud bearing of one denying a crime: "knowing about the crosshatch of open weals and scars that disfigure the child has made him back into a stranger." (151) This new shame, his newly revealed truth, has turned Himi into one scared of the present with its own memory revealed. Kerewin's discovery has redefined his relationship with her; no longer is she merely involved in "a conspiracy of smiles." As she reflects later, "it's a bloody kind of love that has violence as a silent partner." (196) In her quiet knowing she has also become a guardian, watching this silent partner, implicitly joining Simon in the realisation of potential. Now she too is mindful of the future. The trip to Moerangi is a time when that dream of possibility is tested.

Moerangi also shows the reader the deeper contradictions inherent in Joe, and each character. When Kerewin suggests they leave for the holiday, responsibility is not Joe's high priority: "Ahh tama, she likes us eh. She wants to be where we are, after all. It'll all work out fine Himi, all work fine." (153) Memory emerges amongst the raw coastline at Moerangi. There, Joe's complacent hope is challenged by Kerewin's knowledge of his beatings.

Moerangi, Kerewin's "real home" is a place where we learn much more about the trio in their own characteristic ways: Kerewin

through solitary reflection; Joe through shared conversation, and Simon through nightmare. (164) Although the holiday is a time of warmth and humour, it has an ominous atmosphere created through irruptions of the past into the present. This subtly shifts the reader's view of the future. The extremes of the Prologue are echoed in second section of the novel, "The Sea Round."

Kerewin's return to Moerangi represents a return to her own memories of family. Facing the dark island Maukiekie the reader comes closer to the split with her family, the source of her aloneness:

Why did I lose my temper that night and wound everybody with words and memories?

('It's the bloody horrible way you've remembered everything bad about everybody, and kept it and festered it all your life...')

....why do I keep on grieving? When all meaningful links are broken? Forever.

(Because hope remains. Get rid of you hope, Holmes me gangrenous soul. Do you really think you could apologise? Say you were wrong? Ask for forgiveness that might not be given? Never!) (167)

Kerewin's inner dichotomies emerge here. She is deeply affected by the split from her family, and yet remains aloof from coming forward and attempting reconciliation, pride keeping herself apart from the need she has for closeness with those who know and love her. On one line she hopes, and in the next dashes it. Kerewin's pride precludes changing present behaviour to meet her deep needs. Instead, she hardens against her memory, seeing it as a foe to oppose, rather than a source of insight.

Later, a similar coldness enters her when she meets her brother. Simon reports they "had looked for each other for a minute without saying anything." (241) The brother and sister have a stilted conversation and Kerewin refuses his invitation to meet again. She then storms off and plays "shark music." She says to Joe: "'A family can be the bane of one's existence. They can also be the meaning of

one's existence. I don't know whether my family is bane or meaning, but they sure have gone and left a large hole in my heart.'" (242) Joe reads the meaning of these words thus: "I am Kerewin the stony and I never cry. I want to like or even love you, but I don't trust any one now.'" (243)

At the end of the holiday Kerewin feels inexplicably sad, and does not know why: "My memories are refurbished. They've got their souvenirs. It's been a good holiday.... So why should I feel sad?" (255) Part of this sadness stems from the distance that still exists between her and her family despite, or perhaps because of, her "refurbished" memories. But, as she walks to the car, she muses on the future with a degree of optimism: "Maybe there are such things as second chances, even if dreams go unanswered...." (256) This final thought does reveal a glimmer of hope. Just as Joe breathed life into Simon, and continued a vision, so Kerewin must trigger events, as her dream of the new marae foreshadow the awakening of the dormant, "breathing" land. (254) This task of giving life through breath, or *ha* in Maori, is consistent with the giving of *aroaha*.¹⁷ Kerewin's ability to love is tested when she returns to her Tower. Joe's, with Simon at his

¹⁷ Hulme to Dawson, Okarito: "...aroaha is defined in many ways, In fact I deeply suspect there is an individual resonance for every person who uses the word. One of my cousins who has been quite prominent in the cultural safety area, Irihapeti Ramsden... she's a wonderful woman; I have great respect and admiration for her, as well as aroha. Iri tends to define it almost as a contrived tolerance, contrived in the sense of worked at, engendered, giving space for every individual to be or to reach their potential in whatever area. That's a very broad definition of what aroaha is.

I know another person who is very respected in Maori circles who defines it quite specifically. She says her people told her the word came from *aroaro*, which is that sort of closeness you get with seals huddled together or whatever. Proximity, and *ha* which is breath. Well *ha* has many meanings, but one of them is breath, and it's literally that feeling that is engendered by loved ones and family relations, and it does not extend beyond or outside of a quite narrow group of people. It's one of those lovely multi-words.

I'm almost certain it was never meant in the old days to refer to a kind of sticky sentimentality. One thing I am very certain about the olds is that never, ever were they stickily sentimental. It just didn't occur."

side, finds his tested constantly.

Joe's time at Moerangi is one of emerging honesty about his past, and his relationship with Simon. There are long passages of interior monologue where Joe goes over his feelings and reactions towards Simon. He says "'Eh I don't know why I hit you.... it's not like I'm hitting you, my son...'" It feels like it is, says Simon wryly." (171) Simon can be such a forgiving person he often exonerates the wrongdoer. It is no surprise that Joe then looks at him in wonder and says "'God knows I deserve your hate... but you don't hate.'" (171) These statements are important; they highlight Joe's displaced attitude towards the beatings. If it is "not like" hitting Simon when he batters him, then what is he trying to exorcise or destroy? Once again this comment leads us back to his memory and the frozen, hidden feelings of responsibility and pain that clash when faced with the shifting present. Joe's treatment, and Simon's acceptance of it, reveals the degree of fear Joe has. He cannot let past or present feelings "spoil" his hope for future unity. Like Simon, his pain determines his desire for unity, but unlike Simon his imagined unity is currently unrealised as he fails to acknowledge the memory that drives it.

In the course of his conversation with Simon, Joe learns that Kerewin knows of the beatings. That night he ponders: "Himi, what are we going to do? It's all very well for you to tell me to hush up, but what am I going to say tomorrow? How am I going to look her in the eyes now? Same way you been doing before, you great pretender." (172) Joe has not shown the courage to stand alone. Simon is still his partner in crime, and Joe perpetuates this collusion through his own fear. Though he knows he is doing wrong, Joe has not got the courage to be honest. Fear of memory and fear of loss blight his conduct. Unable to accept his pain, Joe hides from the present through

violence, depending on hope to exonerate his actions. The time at Moerangi is one of opposites: of violence and tenderness; of Joe using his hands both as weapons against, and as cradle for Simon's body. Aware of this dual potential characters and readers are charged with caution. Something of his thwarted reaction to the past emerges over the next scenes of recollection.

Joe surveys the two years of pretence that began with the first beating: "A grown man down on his knees beneath the cool moon, crying out the pain in his heart and the guilt in his hands, with no one to hear him anymore." (173) Simon seemed strangely undisturbed after the first beating: "It was," Joe recalls, "almost as if he had been expecting it for a long time, and was now dully relieved that the worst had happened." This comment harks back to the Prologue and Simon's "inchoate" foresight. Joe's recollections are full of detail. He knows he is doing wrong, and that he breaks resolutions, but he still cannot determine why he beats the child, even as he masturbates beside Simon. Desire, guilt and confusion plague him. His memory at this point is tangled and uncertain: "[t]hat's dead past and not to be spoke..." Joe told his cousin Luce. (174) Yet the past haunts him at night. Joe whispers his despair to himself, only to be woken by Simon's gentle enquiry. Unable to bring his honesty into being, Joe says "it's just a nightmare.... just a bad dream." (175) If Joe's dishonesty continues, it will be sometime before the nightmare of the present is over. On waking, still afraid, he admits nothing to Kerewin. His silence continues to affect Simon.

Simon's psychic power is revealed a little more at Moerangi as he sees a tattooed guardian ancestor in the floor of the bach; he also remains crucially aware of his vision, and will try to achieve unity through any means. Simon decides to create a fight that will, he

believes, propel the three of them through the difficulty of unspoken silence. "Here we go..." he thinks to himself, and "go" he does: "Simon sidles up, glares at them and declares war." (188) As Susan Ash mentions, "[l]iterally, Simon intervenes when he enters Kerewin's enclosed domain. His presence forces her to accept some human responsibility. He uses his own blood to bait Joe and Kerewin into a confrontation which he hopes will help them acknowledge the importance of their family bond."¹⁸ Simon had wished to follow the destructive pattern in his memory which experience told him was a means of ensuring a guilt-fed reconciliation:

All morning the feeling had grown, start a fight and stop the illwill between his father and Kerewin. Get rid of the anger round the woman, stop the rift with blows, with pain, then pity, then repair, then good humour again. It works that way...it always did. There isn't much time left for anything to grow anymore. It must be in this place or nothing will grow anymore.

So start a fight.(192)

Violence and memory combine on the beach, and chance intervenes to break the pattern of events as Kerewin collapses.

However, the present counters the safe perception of the past. Simon's vigilant attention to event and outcome is tested by the unequivocal present. Once again, events in the novel serve to remind characters, and participatory readers, that the past must be acknowledged if change is to be accommodated. That change will occur, in any case.

Simon often appears to operate on the physical level simply in order to pay heed to another kind of hidden reality, a potential that has been entirely forgotten. Given the outcome of the novel, this is not surprising; Simon has his life attuned to the spiritual and inner

¹⁸ Ash, Susan. "The Bone People After Te Kaihau" *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1989), pp. 123-35. p. 126.

wellbeing of the two people he loves, because he knows he cannot thrive without them. So he sets up the fight.

Whilst at the bach, Simon also envisions the future in two distinct ways. Firstly, after Kerewin discovers his secret singing, he is overjoyed that his own 'language' has been accepted: "He's got this sweet high feeling everything is going to work out fine from now on, and it's as heady as gorse wine." (238) Simon's second premonition is negative: often his knowledge prefigures a conscious awareness by the other characters, so the reader is drawn into the space of waiting for another piece of information, which then rests silent in the narrative, coiled in the minds of reader and author until the other characters become aware. This brings the reader a sense of foreboding that is only allayed by reading more. In the dark, Simon thinks: "it's not going to work out and there's nothing I can do about it." (251) The Maori ghost that watches him does so for the last time, singing a mournful lullaby of farewell and transition.

If the Prologue acts as an indication of the force and depth of memory, then Simon's relationship with his pain puts him close to the past; he never lets memory out of his sight. On the other hand, "the horror was still at home in him" and it watches, with the nightmares, ready to spring if he is not armed with conscious language. Often Simon has little choice in facing his past: it simply descends upon him in a swathing nightmare.

Simon's inner world is presented more deeply during the Moerangi holiday. Through Kerewin's eyes, the reader perceives exactly what kind of terror he faces from the past when his "golden singers" are silenced. When nightmare erupts, uncontrollable terror possesses his mind and his recent constructive "web" of memory, music and words. In fact, to call the terror he experiences 'memory'

fails to define the way it envelopes his consciousness; a memory can usually be placed in the context of other situations; with Simon, this is not the case. The feelings of "horror" shake him from any recent sense of who (and where) he is and who he will be. Dislocated thus, he is plunged back into a helpless past. Kerewin calls the possession "the shadow to Simon's light." She continues:

The self-control, the unchild-like wit and rationality he often shows, the strange abilities he has, are paid for in this coin.

The noise is full of abject fear, of someone driven to the point where only terror and anguish exist. Nothing else, not even a memory of anything else, sounds as if it remains. (224)

Whereas Joe and Kerewin experience some feelings of distance when reflecting on the past, Simon's memory is pure subconscious material that breaks through the carefully woven strands of his conscious mind. Memory, for Joe and Kerewin, seeps into the present in carefully considered drops, but for Simon it drowns him again in a torrent of amnesic horror. Joe and Kerewin can segment experience, "[t]hat's dead past and not to be spoke." (174) However Simon faces a void that engulfs him; this part of his memory is without end or beginning — an awful "gap in the net" of his consciousness, his "web of music." There, his feelings simply devour him. In many ways Simon needs to be able to analyse and control his feelings, whereas Joe and Kerewin need to accept theirs and open fully to the lessons memory offers.

Nightmares render Simon's relationship with some of his past on a plane of surrender and helplessness. This creates a determination to establish and live in a better future. It also draws the reader towards affirming his determination, and his vision, a vision which, Gaffney argues, "is the central meaning of the book. From his

suffering he comes to an understanding of the new bone people."¹⁹ Simon's suffering extends through his past, a counterpart to his memory. His desire and need for a new fusion is lifelong. It is no wonder he clings to his vision, and snares the reader in that action.

Simon's role is one of watcher in the present, ensuring a particular balance is maintained there. His awareness is in the present, but the part of him that is close to "the horror" monitors events with Joe and Kerewin, testing their strength against his own delicate powers and the encroaching darkness. His guardianship entails a mindful attentiveness which, eventually, the adult characters come to know. Simon's hope is a guardian of the possibility latent in the present, vying always with the past which also looms before him. He is swathed in infinite possibility, pitching his silent language and his fluid music forward into future doubt. His poise and determination set him apart from others, always attending to the strands of love and language that can be plaited anew. By the time he returns back to Whangaroa, Simon knows events will take their own course: "Whatever is going to happen, will happen, and there is nothing at all he can do about it." (256) Involved and facing the unravelling of bonds, he can do little. Each character returns to their recent past with an idea of possibility countered by present limitation. It is those limitations that confront them.

Returning to the Tower, Kerewin faces emptiness again. She tells Joe "These are the only things in my life that are real to me now. Not people. Joe. Not relationships. Not families. Paintings. They remind me I could.... I am dead inside." (264) In effect, Kerewin returns to despair and must confront its cause. Otherwise she will

¹⁹ Gaffney, p. 301.

static, like the "dead things" Betonie warned Tayo about. Joe returns to the clenching hope of togetherness which he will attempt to attain through any means. It has been decided that Kerewin will be consulted before punishment is dealt out to Simon, to prevent outbursts of violence. But by now she is part of "the mystery" too, and has invested enough contemplation (and fear) in the present to have some sense of self to lose and, therefore, get dragged into blinded behaviour.

Kerewin, returning to the Tower alone, experiences it: "as cold and ascetical as a tombstone...." Grieving, she asks herself, "'what's happened? Even my home has turned against me.'" (272) The past Tower of isolation has become too tight; but as she closes out this reality she leaves herself less room to live in the present.

Joe and Kerewin initially attempt to escape from "stasis" through alcohol. However alcohol merely reinforces their confused responses to the present, just as it had helped dim and re-tangle Tayo's vision. Although Kerewin says "Spirals make more sense than crosses, joys more than sorrows..." sense is not a quality she can muster in her current "stasis." (273, 261) She wakes hungover and blames the Gillayley's for her sapped vitality, projecting the cause outside herself. Later in the bar, Joe misinterprets a comment and decides it is Simon that has kept Kerewin aloof. Facts, shared songs and happy memories do not erase this opinion in his mind. Alcohol dulls his perception and understanding. When they part they are both sick in heart and body and between them there is no shared memory. Their limitations have, effectively, squeezed all memory and hope from them, and they separate without remorse. Joe returns home believing his dream of union is dead, Kerewin retreats from the future, and from change, and Simon still hopes, but bears the brunt of the adults' frustration.

The next chapter, "Nightfall" is the end of the present, and, paradoxically, the beginning of both the "end" and the future. It opens in Simon's dream of violence and closes in the reality of a beating that nearly kills him. It ends with Joe venting his regrets and fury on Simon in the most brutal of beatings, and cuts back through time to trace the dissolution. Here, dreaming at the start of the chapter, Simon utters his only words in the novel, "'Ah no.'" The only words Simon speaks, or imagines he speaks in his dream, are full of the fear that has haunted him. Language reveals his fear briefly and honestly. Once again there are words, but "not help." His spoken web cannot prevent the onslaught of "horror." Simon loses all internal and external language. The web dissolves. He plunges towards the darkness, and the "evil reedy voices" ascend to erase his music. (308)

Simon began the day by seeing the grotesque corpse of Binny Daniels, a sight that does nothing to allay the grim scene he has envisioned. The flies that gather round the blood on his path fill his vision and contaminate it with destruction. The end is closing in on each character and each of them feels compelled to smash their lives. Simon goes to the Tower needing comfort and meets an icy Kerewin. She is sick of him and of her "prison." She belongs nowhere. Simon kicks in her guitar, perhaps the only thing she will let herself be comforted by. This sparks Kerewin's torrent of abuse at the boy that she later likens to a flaying, the sanction to beat. And so Joe does: "'You have just ruined everything, you shit.'" He beats him to a point near-death where, for Simon, "The world has gone away. The night has come.'" (309) With descent into blackness, Simon enters the place of coma, and is literally hospitalised. A scapegoat here, he is the living symbol of memory and pain, disrupting the consciousness of

the adults who cannot accept him or themselves.

"Time, time, it's all running out and it could have been a season of rare vintage, this coming summer. Now it has sunk to the vinegary lees," mourns Kerewin. (323) The narrative demonstrates that the potential has stagnated. Kerewin and Joe are now full of guilt for their part in the demise. Kerewin discovers a tumour in her belly, and Joe awaits his prison sentence. Both see the present in a way that Simon has for much of his life; both adults are bound together in guilt and fear. Taking stock, Joe and Kerewin confront their culpability. Kerewin, in particular, admits the impact the Gillayleys have had in her life when she puts on a pendant they gifted to her, with its braid from Simon's hair: "A hook to his jaw and a hook to his thumb and a kind of hook in my heart, by God." Snared, they have "come to the hook" of memory and inner truth, of compulsion and response, action and consequence. This moment echoes Kerewin's Sufic chant early in the novel, and presents her understanding of the inexorable spiral of truth and memory she had conveyed in less confounded tones:

*'There is both amber and lodestone.
Whether thou art iron or straw,
thou wilt come to the hook.'* (65)

Now the past is unavoidable. Joe has finally woken from the "bad dream" into the reality of his conduct. He is honest about his feelings during the final beating, "'I think I was trying to beat him dead,' says Joe. 'I think I was trying to kill him.'" (328)

This time of decay is the time when lies surface, showing the adults how much they have evaded: Kerewin muses later on: "mother of us all, the lies we tell to salve hearts." (323) "'When you're alive you're hurting'" says Joe. (311) Now they must prepare to quest on their own through the hurt and towards the life that quietly

awaits them and always had. Simon has seen it; perhaps now the adults will too. On these journeys they integrate memory into their lives, and realise vision through the agency of appropriate conduct and appreciation of life. Kerewin fires the tricephalous, intertwined symbol of their unity, and walks away from it, towards her own death.

The novel keeps the reader guessing about Kerewin as the story shifts to Joe, "the broken man" who returns to his own roots under the guidance of the kaumatua Tiakinga Meto Mira. From Tiaki he learns of the patience, faith and love necessary in caretaking, and so learns to cherish his own memory and potential.

Weaving the past into the future: *the bone people* and ancestral memory

the bone people and *Ceremony* contain visions of community that have been nurtured over generations. The events that occur in the contemporary time of the novels were planned and envisioned long before Tayo or Simon were born. In both novels, the grandmothers begin the process of becoming they entrust to their only grandson, raised for the task of caretaking. In *Ceremony* this man is Betonie, grown into power and insight through the years.

In *the bone people* the one who has nurtured the vision of healing and convergence is Tiakinga Meto Mira. Both novels depict elders as repositories of ancient lore; their lives have deepened in memory and power, which they prepare to share. It is to these men that Joe and Tayo travel. Both of the sceptical "broken" men hear of a story that shadows the one they are living out, the ones they were born to tell. Hulme says "I revere and love," the character of the

kaumatua, to the extent that she has given him the name of her great-grandfather. The section where we meet him and his grandmother's great vision that cut through generations is, Hulme says, "the heart of the book."²⁰ As Merata Mita states:

Joe connects his past to his future, foretold in the dreams which present themselves as part of an inherited memory. Joe's Maori heritage, overwhelmed by his sadism, his lack of self-worth and general uselessness, asserts itself separately and strongly.²¹

The "inherited memory" Joe taps links him to his own roots and heals his personal wounds. He becomes aware of the overarching presence of cultural memory that contains and defines him. With Tiaki Joe confronts his personal memory, replete with pain and need. In acknowledging this burden, he frees himself to see the "inherited memory" that gives him purpose.

In the shelter of his hut, Tiaki watches Joe have nightmares about Hana and Timote, calling out to ghosts and draining his vitality. As Tiaki says to him on waking, "When the dead are dead, you cannot bring them back. Not by memory, or desire, or love.'" (352) Joe needs to let them go so they can be whole where they are and he can be whole where he is, in the realm of the living. The dead continue to appear in dreams, the kaumatua says, reading Joe's thoughts: "'Sometimes, there are very good reasons for their persistence in our world. Sometimes, we have failed them'" Joe recalls an important point: "Look after our child, she had said. And I have hurt him. And I have lost him." (353) Joe's failure to honour Hana has corrupted his memory and his present, as well as Simon's. Joe must be healed of his guilt and dislocation. For as the old man explains he has much work,

²⁰ Hulme, K. *the bone people*, extracts introduced and read on National Radio, 1985. (Wellington: Replay Radio, 1985)

²¹ Mita, p. 8.

and much loving, to do: "'You are a sick man, a broken man, but now it is time for you to heal, to be whole. To flourish and bear fruit.'" (355)

What Tiaki Mira offers Joe is the guardianship of "this country's soul," the spiritual cargo of one of the great canoe holding the first Maori that travelled to Aotearoa from their ancestral home Hawaiki. (370) It is a stone that contains the mauri or mauriora of the land; Hulme describes it as the "Life principle, thymos of humans; talisman or material symbol of that secret and mysterious principle protecting the mana (power/vitality) of the people, birds, lands, forests...." (449) Another saying related to this pervasive and vital sacred force is quoted, and translated, by Cleve Barlow:

He manawa ka whitikitia, he mauri ka mau te hono. Ko te hunga mate kua wehe koutou i te hono, kokiri wairua ki ti tihi o mauri aitua.

Ka tareparepa mai te mauriora ki te ao; ka tareparepa atu te mauri mate ki tua o te arai.

The heart provides the breath of life, but the mauri has the power to bind or join. Those who die have been released from this bond and the spirit ascends the pinnacle of death.

The mauri enters and leaves at the veil which separates the human world from the spirit realm.

As Barlow explains, mauri mediates and binds the two worlds of body and spirit. "The mauri makes it possible for a thing to exist within the bounds of its own creation."²² The *mauriora* Joe inherits on behalf of all people has the potential to reawaken the links between the physical land and the spiritual memory that lies dormant. It is the force that "knits" the "two very different histories" (as Hulme termed them) under one process of growth. As a consequence, this rejuvenation extends outwards to the people of the land. Susan Ash asserts that "the commensal vision depends upon

²² Barlow, C. *Tikanga Whakaaro*; p. 82-3.

accepting Maori spirituality in *the bone people*.”²³ Doing this opens the reader to the ancestral memory: we must accept the vision of the past in order to accept the resolution of the novel.

In accepting the guardianship of this force, Joe unleashes the spirit that will bind past memory to present events. The fusion places Maori spirituality in the present, foregrounding and affirming the web of cultural memory. Rescuing the sacred object, Joe returns home, his cultural and personal memory flourishing.

Central to the journey to becoming which Joe and Kerewin undergo, Simon's recovery results in a strengthening of *constructive* memory as his own consciousness strives to overcome his earliest and more recent horrors: "The hated voice grows weaker, cannot sing as freely. The old fears seem impotent in the face of what has happened." (386) Susan Ash notes Simon has, throughout the novel, been affiliated with figures in Maori mythology.²⁴ As a "tide-washed child" he mimics the experience of the mythical hero Maui, who subsequently fished up the North Island of New Zealand, known as Te Ika A Maui, the fish of Maui. Simon, landing an enormous fish at Moerangi, exhibits a similar determination. Hulme has stated that his realm of origin lies in Celtic myth, as Judith Dale notes:

Keri Hulme strongly resists the interpretation of Simon as a Christ-figure, here as in other critics' work. In a personal letter (commenting on a draft of this article) she identifies his 'provenance' as 'the Celtic "marvellous stranger" or "marvellous child" (Aifa and Cuchulain's son Connla, or Arianrhod's child Dylan, from the *Mabinogion*)' and refers to his sea-colouring as evidence. She insists that 'none of his suffering is for anyone else' and that 'each of the three main characters work things through by themselves.'²⁵

²³ Ash, p. 129.

²⁴ Ash, p. 126.

²⁵ Dale, J. "the bone people: (Not) Having It Both Ways" *Landfall* No. 156, December, 1985, pp. 413-428. p. 427-8.

Simon leads the reader through the mythic past of Maori and Celtic tradition. He enacts a balancing and re-membling of cultural memory, as he attends diligently to the vision of unity that has guided him through the story, and now guides him, like Tayo, back to his true homeplace. When that returning occurs, Simon will have helped create "the people who make another people." (469)

Simon's journey is one into the future. His recovery is his way of creating a new memory, firmly focused on his envisioned home with Kerewin and Joe. It is a vision he has spent the entire story attending to. However, as Shona Smith notes, Simon's "ordeal is more social than spiritual, and is marked by a constant and unwavering determination to be reunited with the two people whose ultimate relation to him he never doubts."²⁶ Simon awakens gradually from his coma, through a journey into his new body of consciousness and still-present need for the two adults. Memory is fundamental to his recovery: his desire to return home is a constituent of his new will.

Isolated and lonely, Simon wishes to move away from the confines of the hospital. His first feelings are of restraint and wrenching isolation. His hands are 'blind,' and 'mute' strapped beside him. He has become pure silence enduring the dark and "listening helplessly to the voices.... He watches, his hope never quite dead, for them to enter." (386) His first conscious thoughts link back to memory and forward to the home he imagines with Kerewin and Joe. He has also developed "a new keen instinct for self-preservation" which involves selective recall of events that keep him focused on

²⁶ Smith, S. "Keri Hulme: Breaking Ground" *Untold* 2, Spring 1984. pp. 44-9. p. 47.

the present, rather than falling into the dark gap of his past. (387) This child of two grief-racked fathers still longs for family and community.²⁷ Despite the violence, he knows Joe is capable of tenderness and kind touch, none of which he has received much of in his hospital bed.

The hospital cannot conceive Simon would want to return to Joe. Yet that is the boy's only desire. This polarity between institutional decision-making and the child's need is another gap in the novel between what is longed for and what in fact occurs.

He had endured it all. Whatever they did to him and however long it was going to take, he could endure it. Provided, at the end, he went home.

And home is Joe, Joe of the hard hands but sweet love. Joe who takes care. The strong man, the man who cries with him. And home has become Kerewin, Kerewin the distant who is so close. The woman who is wise, who doesn't tell him lies. The strong woman, the woman of the sea and fire.(395)

Simon simply longs for home and the people who made and will make that place. His memory and his future have become fused with Joe and Kerewin: their bodies and minds have become his home. Simon's attachment to their personalities is important. His faith in the future is exceptional, because it is his only salvation. The institutional present and his nightmare past offer nothing of community or love, two qualities Simon so generously shares and needs:

And if he can't go home, he might as well not be. They might as well not be because they only make sense together. He knew that in the beginning with an elation beyond anything he had ever felt. He had worked at keeping them together, whatever the cost....But we have to be together. If we are not we are nothing. We are broken. We are nothing.

It is almost worse than the night.

Because now he can see nothing ahead, nothing at all.(395)

Simon's attention to his recent positive memories help to keep

²⁷ See Hulme's story "A Drift in Dream" for details of Simon's parents and childhood. His father Timon, who died with Tiaki, beat Simon because he could not stand his own grief. For him too, Simon was a reminder of loss. *Te Kaihau / The Windeater*. (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1986, 1992. 220p.), pp. 195-210.

the possibility of resolution and fulfilment alive for the reader. Events are structured to keep participatory readers involved and willing the same outcome which Simon needs. Hulme counters the destructiveness of Joe's violence with the potentially constructive desire for a homeplace. This encourages the reader's participation in the story, as we see the tension between "[c]reation and change, destruction and change." In this way the narrative reveals the potential for stories to encapsulate healing and despair. Caught within this interplay, we read on, seeking balance. Simon's honest needs point to the creation of a nurturing place. Violence is not a decent alternative to the vision Simon desires. His vision becomes the balance the reader seeks.

Simon's needs are clear. His first conscious query related to Joe and Kerewin; they are all he asks about, and he is either with them, or his life is worthless: "he might as well not be." Simon's response to the institutional theft of his hope is one of living death. He becomes a "wooden child"(396) existing to block out collusion with the officials. But Hulme shows there is one gap in the barrier: only those who cherish memory for what it holds can enter Simon's secret world of community. In doing so, one doctor, Fayden Sinclair unfolds the next part of the story that has been hibernating beneath Simon's resistance. Sinclair advises rebellion and rejection of any institution that does not respect his need for community by sending him *home*. With this in mind, Simon's will is focused on the positive construction of, and returning to the people he loves.

Simon absconds towards the "perilous and new" becoming embodied in himself, Kerewin and Joe. His escapes are epic in their scope and inventiveness considering his frailty, age and injuries. However, when he returns to the Tower it is a ruin. "The world has

burned and he is in the midst of desolation." (410) What rescues him from this final blow is the tricephalous, a sign to him: "Together, all together, a message left for you, and he clasps it to his chest as hard as he can, and will never let it go." Each character realises their bonds with place, memory and community as a result of their quests. Kerewin's journey creates the final link between the characters as she faces death in "her fiery journey into the heart of the sun." (428)

Kerewin's journey has an aura of hope in spite of her despondency. This has been encouraged by the hints of potential Simon revealed, and the tricephalous she fired in the remains of her "palace of shadows." (419) She faces a range of medical specialists (who generally appear dogmatic) and finally heads for the hills to die alone, watching her body decay as it recalls memory: "I am minded of that night in Whangaroa, at the pub with Joe, when that voice beat against my heartboards. I am minded of the child in his silent darkness." (421). Her bones melt, her nightmares tell all her fears. The outcome of her painful journey is a loosening of the "heartboards" that kept her away from the joys of creativity and community. Kerewin has help; she has guidance in her return to love and life, her renewal of judgment.

A strange "snaggleteethed" person, androgynous and ageless has been watching her, and perhaps instructing her in the art of caretaking. Maybe this "small dark person" is the little man from the Moerangi bach; in any case it asks in wisdom, asks her *memory* "'What do you love?'" (422) She loves the earth, Papatuanuku — mother of sustenance, holder of us all, and the beauties and powers of the natural world; she even knows, at the end of her purification and cleansing of body and heart, that she loves herself:

'but not me alone. He's the bright sun in the eastern sky, and he's the

moon's bridegroom at night, and me, I'm the link and life between them. We're chance we three. We're the beginning three.' (424)

And thus Kerewin affirms her future in the hearts of the two who span the skies, with her centred in the middle, memory and dream telling her again and again to return and renew, with tribal roots, kin and the other two, and with her creative life and painting. "Full of new wiry strength and gentle energy and determined not to wreck it," Kerewin has discovered how to care for her self and thus for others. (427) She immediately makes plans to rebuild a home. Her creative energy is unleashed, as she tells her journal: *"I am weaving webs, and building dreams and every so often this this wonder seizes me unawares."* (431) Kerewin, in "weaving" her web affirms the ordered and joyous conduct of remembrance and creative continuance. She is rewarded with "wonder" and growth. Both Joe and Kerewin finish their quests with the word "home." They recognise their place of belonging, as Simon has all along.

Memory is affirmed for all time: nothing can remove what Simon has known all along, and it is a shared knowledge now. Two people have home in the hearts, and their hearts guiding them. They return home to the 'old place' of new memories and people: "New marae from the old marae, a beginning from the end." (3) The past a substance the present is built on. Joe, free of the "jail of memories" sees memory and the past as an integral part of his present, defining conduct and value: "It's past but we live with it forever." (427, 444) Memory has become a guide rather than a restriction; a source of knowledge rather than "dead past." Now the earth-sourced woman helps, in her own way to bring the troubled trinity together. She offers her name and Joe offers Kerewin her family; Simon offers himself. In his silent presence he reminds Joe that the past is before him. Simon has paid a great price for maintaining his vision, but

standing in a circle above the sunken mauri that “waits, and spins its magic in deep silence.” (441) The silence— and the magic — Simon has entered, and prompted Kerewin and Joe to enter, spins and spirals around them, accepted as “part of” the story of their lives. With the rebirth of the mauriora, memory takes on its own life, spiralling in the minds of the characters, and the country itself. Kerewin, Simon and Joe dwell in the vast memory of the earth, a nourishing memory and power they can connect with as they continue to encounter their past. Memory becomes web and then spiral as the strands of story continue to flourish, re-membered by the three new guardians.

Kerewin whirls her spiral home through the passage of events “the round shell house holds them all in its spiralling embrace.” The three link hands anew in the birth of a new dawn: “Ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea....” (442, 445) The sun rises, and the new story begins its spiral through emergent memory, fragile and interpenetrant as the light.

Towards A Conclusion...

'My Grandmother told me that the white man never listens to anyone, but he expects everyone to listen to him. So, we listen! The wind isn't a good listener! The wind wants to speak, and we know how to listen. My father always told me that an Eskimo is a listener. We have survived here because we know how to listen. The white people in the lower forty-eight talk. They are like the wind; they sweep over everything. I used to think we would survive them, too. But I'm not so sure. When I look at my grandchildren, I am not sure at all!'

Anonymous Eskimo Grandmother¹

Say this: say in my mind

I saw your spiders weaving threads
to bandage up the day. And more,
those webs were filled with words
that tumbled meaning into wind.

James Welch²

In both *Ceremony* and *the bone people* language is sourced in the spiral of history and the web of memory. Words derive their power from the resonant presence of these patterns. In turn, people derive their own power and identity from mindful attention to the "eternal" becoming of stories. Thus the story continues, and the people are strong. In their work, Silko and Hulme lead us to an understanding of the persistence and the power of the patterns embedded in memory

¹ Coles, R. *The First and Last Eskimo*, reprinted in Peter Nabokov (ed.), *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations From Prophecy to the Present, 1492-1992*. (New York: Viking, 1992, 474p.)

² Welch, J. from "Snow Country Weavers" in D. Niatum (ed.), *Carriers of the Dream Wheel*, (New York: Harper & Row) p. 249.

and in story, patterns waiting to be realised.

Acknowledging the pre-eminence, and the immanence, of history/story, *the bone people* and *Ceremony*, through their own crafted evolution, document micro-ruptures and trauma — the devastating effects of colonial, material forces upon ancient “fragile” stories. They also document the enduring power of these stories. The novels are open-ended, free of any easy solutions. They promote the integrity of honest caretaking, a mindful remembrance, and a re-reading of contemporary existence. Existence, the weave of belief, experience, and conduct, can emerge through language. Jim Barnes affirms the way creative language can re-make the world and overcome “‘dead things’”: “In the agony of stasis, sound comes, the first word and — if we are lucky — the poem as world, the world as poem.”³ Language potentially celebrates and revives existence, particularly a language of reverence, a language that *listens* to its own origins, as it becomes [in] the present. Such a system legitimates the authority of language to speak us, and re-member us.

That authority connects inextricably to the spiralling web of cultural memory. The spiral pattern of Kerewin’s “new marae,” the clockwise motion Tayo follows when shaking snow off Ts’eh’s apricot tree, and the movement of the spider as she weaves her web: all these motions have creative power. Language *can* integrate that power into utterance, rather than blowing through the web. Words can be used to respect memory. The stories, and the participants in story, are consolidated and gather in memory, as “part of” an accretive (re-membered) process of becoming and belonging, tumbling and telling “meaning into wind” together.

³ Barnes, J. *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*. Edited by Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 93.

Each word, as Silko shows us, is a strand in the weave of the web. When words lack validity and become false or unfelt, cut from their origins, their history, and therefore their deeper meaning, they cause disruption in the spiral. Gaps occur. Trauma prevails. Precision is lost in the wind that tangles both the foundation and context of memory. Both Silko and Hulme affirm the value of individual remembrance woven and sourced in ancient memory. This precise creative weaving is a process; it offers coherence in a world full of ideological gaps and silences, devastated by the winds of dogma.

We are "one clan" under the latent destructive power of nuclear weapons; we are also capable of love. These two awful possibilities surround each one of us at *every* moment. Which story would you have told?

Listen here, in the silence...

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